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CINEMA QUARTERLY

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Cover Design by
E. McKNIGHT KAUFFER

● Editorial and Publishing Offices:
24 N.W. THISTLE ST. LANE, EDINBURGH, 2
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THE SPECTATOR

CLEAR THE DECKS!

For the greater part of its history the cinema has been attacked, neglected, or unfeignedly despised. The claims of the pioneers who discerned the potentialities of the film as a medium of expression were openly scoffed at; at best they were tolerated with superior condescension. But to-day, after years of patient propaganda, they are backed by a growing body of public opinion. We are now able to talk about "intelligent filmgoers," and to address them, knowing that they exist in even greater numbers than is generally realised.

According to C. A. Lejeune, unusually optimistic, these wise folk can succeed in raising the standard of production by demanding from exhibitors a better type of film and by staying away from films they don't want to see. A pious hope! Until popular education and the general level of civilisation is improved a hundredfold there will always be sufficient people willing to spend their ninepence (or their eight-and-six) on films that are no better than the present measure of specious entertainment. Intelligent filmgoers, numerous as they are, could have little effect on the box-office if they all decided never to enter a picture-house again. The trouble at present is that too many people of the type who might be expected to appreciate good films stay away from the cinema altogether. St. John Ervine, it would appear, is more persuasive than Miss Lejeune.

But if discerning patrons cannot prevent bad or indifferent films from being made, they can encourage and support the production of films with higher ideals and with a greater sense of artistic integrity than the average cinema audience is accustomed to. This patronage of worth-while films can make all the difference between financial failure and modest but adequate success. Only by the prospect of their paying their way can even the most idealistic producers be encouraged to make such films, and only by the public exhibition of these films can it be hoped to raise the general level of appreciation, and so ultimately of production.

But to effect any influence on production, and to exert the strength of its numbers, this patronage must be organised. An intensive campaign must be waged against the attitude of the commercial cinema which prefers to ignore intelligence rather than to cater for it. Before the call to action goes forth, however, it must be seen that the decks are clear and that the course set is the right one.

THE FILM INSTITUTE

The establishment of the British Film Institute adds a new and much-needed power to the campaign for the development of intelligent cinema. The Institute has many tasks to perform—the dissemination of information and advice, research into the development and use of the film, the formation of a national repository of films, the linking of trade and "cultural and educational interests," and the influencing of public opinion—and in order to perform these tasks thoroughly it asks for, and most definitely requires, the co-operation of specialist bodies already engaged in the various fields of cinema, educational, social, and cultural activity.

In spite of an unsatisfactory constitution which places control in the hands of a governing body on which there is no public representation, the Institute is capable of accomplishing an immense amount of good. In so far as it can achieve results, opposition to its efforts on the part of other organisations would be futile and niggardly. But as a national organisation, approved by the Government and spending public funds, the Institute must expect—and receive—criticism as well as help. It exists not for the convenience of its members, but for the benefit of the public—an important consideration which receives emphasis by the publication of "The Cinema and the Public," in which Walter Ashley presents "a critical analysis of the origin, constitution and control of the 'British Film Institute.'"

THE ASHLEY ATTACK

Ashley's criticism takes the form of a letter to the President of the Privy Council, whom he wished to influence against recognising the Institute's claim for a grant from the Cinematograph Fund. With a mass of carefully documented evidence it seeks to prove that the Institute is largely under the control of the film trade, and that it is powerless to exert any effective influence over the mass of entertainment films. In his zeal to prove his case, however, Ashley has interpreted certain events to suit his argument. There is no evidence, for instance, that "Scotland is wisely preparing to cut itself off" from the operations of the B.F.I.—the actual position being, that provided Scotland can retain its independence to deal with its own problems (which are substantially different from those of England) it is both willing and anxious to co-operate with the Institute.

The main object in Ashley's "exposure" was frustrated by the fact that publication was delayed until too late to have any effect on the allocation of the Privy Council grant. What will be its influence on public opinion depends on the importance readers place on the facts removed from their opinionative context.

THE FILM SOCIETIES

In an introduction to a recently published book entitled "For Filmgoers Only," R. S. Lambert, one of the Governors of the British Film Institute, suggests that the film society movement, "which draws its strength from a certain dispair," may be in danger of developing "a 'coterie' sense expressing itself in an excessive admiration for one particular kind of film, as, for instance, a few years ago, the Russian film." This is both misleading and ungenerous, as well as impolitic on the part of one representing a body requiring all the organised support it can get. Does Mr. Lambert's interest in cinema not go far enough back for him to remember that it was the Russian film more than anything else which first aroused general interest in the new art of the film? In any case, the spread of the film society movement did not come until the first wave of enthusiasm for the Russian film had passed, and I challenge Mr. Lambert to discover in the programmes of the film societies published in *Cinema Quarterly* any evidence of coterie tendencies.

Instead of belittling the achievement of the film societies, many of whom have been doing for years work which the Institute is only now attempting, it might have been expected that some form of co-operation would have been sought. True, societies have been invited to become "branches" of the Institute—at the cost of forfeiting their independence and working under conditions of financial and administrative control which would preclude their proper functioning. Meanwhile, though cinema as a whole would benefit from the establishment of an efficient central organisation and a reliable information bureau, the Institute is proceeding to form branches up and down the country. This it is perfectly justified in doing, and some of its branches are already doing excellent work in areas where no organisation was already in existence. But it is an exaggeration to claim that they are accomplishing more than the principal film societies are doing in their own sphere.

The independent film societies, unhampered by any restrictive constitution or the limits of orthodoxy, must continue their separate existence as the advance-guard of the cinema—though of course this does not imply opposition to the Institute, whose aims and projects most societies, if asked, would be pleased to assist wherever possible. When new bodies come to be formed in districts as yet unorganised they will have to consider whether their ideals can best be served by remaining independent or under the ægis of centralised control.

NORMAN WILSON.

A POET LOOKS AT THE CINEMA

POETRY AND FILM

HUGH MacDIARMID

Some of the remarks made in the editorials in the last issue of *Cinema Quarterly*, under the captions "Literature and the Film" and "Words and Music," give me a convenient jumping-off place for this short article—particularly these sentences: "For some time the virtue of the spoken word has been in doubt. The hundred-per-cent. talkie is no more, and even Hollywood is beginning to use words selectively and even impressionistically, instead of in the name of realism," and "the music [for films] must be specially composed." Poetry is a much more complex and concentrated form of expression than prose—the characteristic of all great poetry is an economy in presenting experience which keeps us wondering that so much can be said in so few words. It may be defined as the art of maximum statement in minimum space. The consequence of this is its unrivalled quality of memorableness—and the desirability, even the need, of associating this quality with the cinema by every possible means needs no stressing. But the difference between poetry and mere verse (which are so generally confused) is that the latter simply decorates the unelucidated fact with fancy while the former is endowed with the imagination which penetrates to the reality in the fact. Realism, in the sense used in the sentence quoted above, is mere actualism—the acceptance of the fact; the cinema has not gone far beyond that yet and then only in superadding fancy; the future of the cinema depends on its power to use imagination. I say the future of the cinema advisedly, instead of merely its artistic future; its commercial future also depends upon that in the last resort. The hundred-per-cent. use of the spoken word (and a very great deal less than a hundred per cent.) in conjunction with actualist photography is a false convention; the two things are discordant from the beginning—because people do not talk that way, or not much, and when they do they are not being true to themselves but obeying a convention. Instead of consisting of grammatical sentences and a logical progression, people's intercourse is a thing of verbal fragments and expressive sounds, needing no continuity of utterance because it is supplemented by all manner of gestures, looks, understandings, and what not. The importance of this from the cinema standpoint is that the cinema already has all that essential supplemental substance of

expression as printed literature has not; to follow the latter, therefore, in using the unlifelike verbal continuity which the disabilities of the latter necessitate is trebly disadvantageous, because it is at once unlifelike, unnecessary, and repetitive in an inferior medium to what the film itself is expressing. It is also unmodern—in other words, anachronistic to the art of the cinema—since much of the experimentation in modern literature has been due to a realisation of this disability and to efforts to cut out the dead wood of expression. In so far as the cinema has associated itself with verbal expression it has been with forms of it not contemporaneous with itself. There is another point: by eschewing words altogether the cinema would remain unlifelike in another way by having the gestures, looks, and so on dissociated from the words and sounds which actually accompany them, and upon which, in real life, they are as dependent as the disjointed words and sounds are upon them. In this common plight of literature and the cinema, then, it seems to me that they are indispensable to each other, and in the long run this may be discerned as the main (if not the only) significance of the emergence of the cinema at this juncture in the history of human expression and communication. The relation, or possible relation, of literature to the cinema is seen to be, from this standpoint, precisely the opposite of that of broadcasting to literature.

As if it had anticipated the advantages of the cinema accruing to it, literature, as I have said, has long been experimenting intensively along the lines necessary to enable it to seize that great opportunity. Much modernist literature from Tolstoy onwards depends upon a realisation of the revelation of personalities less in speech than in sound (a fact which provides an adequate commentary on the efforts of the B.B.C. to standardise pronunciation!) and recent Russian literature, for example, has concentrated to a great extent on the exploitation of *skaz* (or inter-sense) and *zaumny* (or local and personal intonations of all kinds). The general preoccupation with the "stream of consciousness"—with, not the banal conventionalities people utter, most of which they use less to express themselves than to disguise what they are really thinking, but with what lies behind these—is another great pointer in the same direction. It is absurd that a magnificent instrument like the cinema should be content, in the period of tremendous advances in psychological knowledge with which it synchronises, and to which the modern literature in question is so intimately related, to depend on stock stage and penny novelette conceptions of human nature of the most otiose kind. A great deal of work in modernist poetry consists in the exploitation of pure sound, and, alike from the psychological and purely æsthetic sides, it is with the poets that the verbal future of the cinema lies, since prose remains the language of logical discourse and most of its

context is redundant to the film, whereas poetry has not only maximum economy, supreme revelatory power, and capacities, equal to its unrivalled power of penetrating reality, for soaring away from it altogether but of associating itself with music. I agree with Hitchcock that the music must be specially composed; so must the poetry. It will be the cheapest possible addition to film-making, probably. Most poets would jump at the opportunity for next to nothing.

Probably no contemporary writer has had a more widespread and profound influence, both as a poet and a critic, on his contemporaries than T. S. Eliot, and it is interesting to find him saying, in his latest book:

> "After admitting the possible existence of minor 'difficult' poets whose public must always be small, I believe that the poet naturally prefers to write for as large and miscellaneous an audience as possible, and that it is the half-educated and ill-educated, rather than the uneducated, who stand in his way: I myself should like an audience which could neither read nor write. The most useful poetry, socially, would be one which could cut across all the present stratifications of public taste—stratifications which are perhaps a sign of social disintegration."

He draws attention in a footnote to some helpful remarks on the subject of "education" from this angle in D. H. Lawrence's "Fantasia of the Unconscious," and it is undoubtedly along the lines of overcoming this barrier and bringing the artist into direct contact with the vast public without the interposition of a parasitical and misleading "interpreting class" that the cinema can render a stupendous social, cultural, and creative service. Eliot is supposed to be a highbrow of the highbrows. He is. But I am certain that much of his work would be immensely popular if it could be put over directly to the big public. My own work has similarly been criticised as extremely difficult and limited in its appeal. But whenever I have had an opportunity of reading any of it to a general audience I have found it popular, and my "synthetic Scots" at its most synthetic "goes over" all right, because it is pure onomatopœia—a universal speech; Scots in quality. Another case in point is James Joyce, who has similarly been condemned as hopelessly highbrow and quite unreadable. Those who have heard the gramophone record of his reading of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" know how absurd these charges are. It becomes at once intelligible to everybody and a most enchanting experience. How magnificently it would go with a film! Incidentally, it may be pointed out that Joyce's multi-linguistic medium is definitely along the right lines; that extraordinary amalgam in which elements of over fifteen languages have already been "spotted" becomes simultaneously—*when spoken*, not read—a universal speech, and all the more intensely Irish.

It is easy to see that while these elements in modernist literature are along lines appropriate to cinema use, there are other elements which the cinema must progressively eschew. This is what led H. A. Potamkin, discussing "Pabst and the Social Film," to say the film-producer "no longer dallies with 'the woman who has been abundantly charged with sex-consciousness'; she is only a figure of speech. *Pandora's Box* is inconclusive, not because 'one should not make films of literature'—that is a sophistry—nor unsatisfying because Wedekind cannot be cinematised. It is inconclusive and unsatisfying because the literary source is a network of negotiations, and not the experience of people; and the film, in consequence, figures of speech stalking as men and women." But Potamkin went on to show what can be done when he said of *Kameradschaft*:

> "Sound has allowed Pabst an aid in the double-speech, French and German, very specific values, and a lingering quality—*e.g.* '*Georges!*' called by the old man—that sensitises the appeal of pathos. The French girl who has refused a dance to the German the night before, beholding the rescuing-party, murmurs: '*Les Allemands! C'est pas possible!*' Here is a speech within the theme, speech that is correlative to the play of the people at the mine-gate. The inflection is contained within a subdued range, allowed to break through at strategic points. Its essence is documentary, its contact revelatory, and along the line of its construction Pabst might have extended his message to its fullness, thereby forestalling the criticism that the film lacks warmth. But for this extension was needed the consummation of Pabst's own ethical tendency."

Precisely! That is, in other words, the problem of artistic integrity, and the whole question of the cinema realising its vast potentialities depends upon that. My purpose here has been to stress only a few special points in relation to it, and the words "correlative," "strategic points," and "revelatory" in the above quotation bring me back to the fact that the poetry must be specially composed—and that the poetry, the music, and the film must be complementary to each other, and neither repetitive of, and therefore redundant to, each other, nor discrete in the way that cinema music, and, in a different field, the settings of many songs are being applied to purposes for which they were never intended, and receiving a slack conventional acceptance from the confused receptivity of the audience. It may be worth mentioning in closing that a little reflection on the part of those most vitally concerned with the artistic integrity and popular appeal of the cinema upon the history of human culture generally, and the theatre in particular, will show that popular entertainments always reached the highest levels of artistic integrity and simultaneously had the greatest hold on the public when they were most closely associated with poetry.

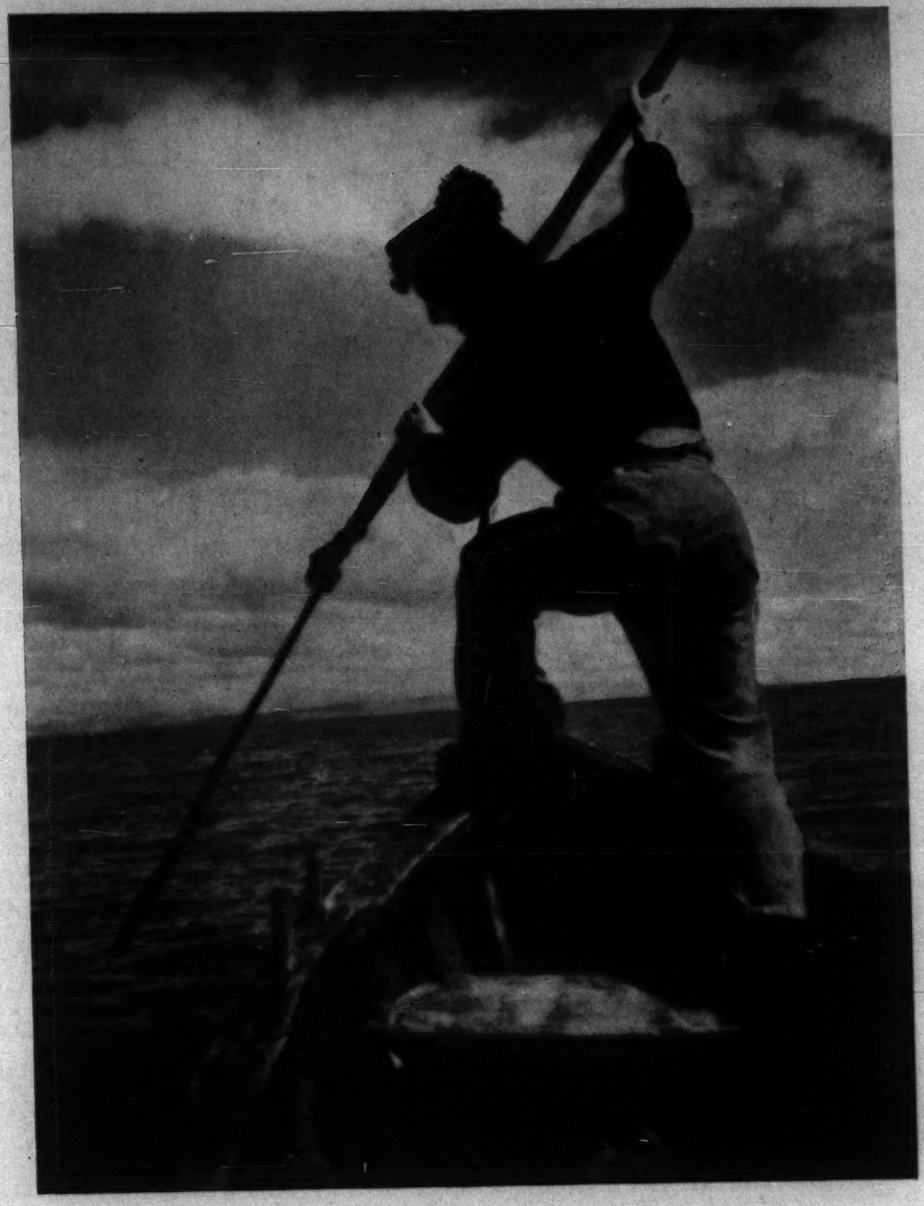
THE COMMUNALISTIC ART OF WALT DISNEY

MACK W. SCHWAB

WALT DISNEY has been praised for a variety of contributions to creative cinema, but one of the most interesting aspects of Disney and his creations has been almost completely ignored and neglected. And that is the uniquely communalistic method Disney has developed for the creation and production of his cartoons since the birth of Mickey Mouse five years ago. A hundred or more creative workers are responsible in some degree for each cartoon, and yet the result always typifies the genius of one artist, Walt Disney. It is doubtful whether (even in Soviet Russia, where group effort is paramount) there is any form of artistic activity comparable to that in the Disney studio, in which such heterogeneity of effort achieves so successfully homogeneity in its accomplishment.

In describing the manner in which the cartoons are developed, there is a danger of over-formalising a casual method of work. Compared to the routine and departmental order in the major studios, the atmosphere of the Disney studio is Arcadian in its informality. Ideally planned for the fantastic creative activity essential to cartoon production, the Disney studio allows its artists complete freedom to be as creative in as many different ways as they are capable. As specific credit is absent in Disney cartoons, there is no jealousy to mar diverse and combined effort, as is often the case in the major studios. It is communalistic work, under the controlling and inspirational figure of Walt Disney himself, whose sensitive and imaginative spirit permeates all the productive work in the studio. Deservedly, he receives all the responsibility for the success of the cartoons, while the other artists work in co-operative anonymity. In spite of the unconstrained atmosphere, however, the work is by no means chaotic. Inasmuch as twenty-six cartoons must be produced each year (the present booking obligation), a certain definite systematic procedure is compulsory.

A cartoon, from its origin as a rather vague story idea to its final photographing on film, involves about four months of work (as the production-schedule indicates the necessity of an average of one completed cartoon every two weeks, different cartoons are in various stages of development simultaneously). About half of the time consumed for the completion of a cartoon is occupied in preparing a detailed scenario. For this task there is a story department composed



From "Man of Aran," directed by Robert Flaherty, which depicts the arduous life of the inhabitants of the Aran Islands, off the West Coast of Ireland. A Gainsborough Picture.

TOP.
A Disney animator at work.

CENTRE.
Original sketch used to illustrate a Mickey Mouse version of Gulliver's Travels.

BOTTOM.
Walt Disney and some members of the studio in an informal conference.

of ten or so. They think up new ideas, re-work old tales (Disney's re-creations from old legends—*Jack the Giant Killer*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Gulliver's Travels*, etc.—is reminiscent of the practice of the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare), and develop stories already accepted. Disney's greatest influence is felt in this department. It is the quality of the story and the plot detail which is one of the most distinguishing features of the Disney cartoon. Many animators have left the Disney studio for other cartoon work, and yet their artistic effort, clever and imaginative as it may be, is usually lost in second-rate material. Disney's suggestions for stories and gag incidents in the stories are those most often accepted. But he is in no way dictatorial. It is the studio as a group which decides on the stories, and when Disney has a story which the other members of the studio disfavour, it is either shelved or discarded. For instance, *Three Little Pigs* was submitted by Disney for a year before the studio finally approved of it.

When a story is accepted, Disney and the story department scrutinise its possibilities, and then one of its members writes it up in a page synopsis. This synopsis is circulated to about ninety members of the studio, animators, gag men, musical composers, etc., who, incited by the story possibilities, during two weeks create gags, little actions, and other embellishments for the plot. At a luncheon conference lasting three hours or more, the pile of suggestions (mostly quick drawings on paper accompanied by written annotations) are presented, criticised, and discussed by Disney, some members of the story department, the director who is assigned to the cartoon, the layout man (he is the co-ordinating artist, a sort of continuity animator who works out the detailed action which the forty or more animators will follow), the musical director, and several animators. The conference is exciting, animated, and often quite humorous. Hurried sketches are created and passed round. A composer rattles off a theme while another person rhythmically enacts an animal action. When Disney acts out a Mickey Mouse sequence he seems to be the very mouse he has created.

Next, a story-writer completes a detailed scenario, which is illustrated by about fifty sketches of the main incidents in the action. The scenario is then handed over to the director, who, with the aid of Disney, the musical director, and the layout man, forms a detailed time-sheet for every minute movement. This time-sheet is developed on a principle of beats in synchronisation with the musical score, which has been composed coincidently with the working out of the scenario. Thus each action has been synchronised with the music before either the music is recorded or the action animated. This simultaneous creation of music and action is one of Disney's significant contributions to the progress of the animated cartoon. When the

time-sheet is completed, the director portions out sections of the action to the forty or more animators.

Then the animation begins. As each animator can do at the most in one day a number of drawings equal to five feet of film, it takes about a month for the animation alone. The animation is divided in various ways. The backgrounds are created by regular artists, and only the moving figures are animated. As some of the animators are more proficient for certain incidents and characters in the action (for example, there is one animator who is particularly adept in drawing dancing figures, another in depicting ferocious villains) they are so assigned. It is interesting that Disney himself no longer does any animation, and rarely submits a drawing. The animators, besides being imaginative artists, must be able to vivify characters and their movements. In order to give life to their characters, they resort to all sorts of antics, watch their mirrored reflections as they go through the movements of their subject, watch other people go through motions, and, when the subjects are animals (as they most often are), in order to give them their proper zoological characteristics as well as human attributes, they sometimes resort to observing animals perform in the zoo and on the screen. After a section is sketchily animated, it is photographed and observed by Disney, the director, and the animator as to its convincingness. If it is satisfactory, then girls copy the drawings on celluloid with black paint, or if it is a coloured cartoon in colour. Disney demands a definite quality in his cartoons, and if certain scenes do not seem satisfactory when screened, they must be re-done. Sometimes a whole cartoon is shelved because Disney or some of the other members in the studio do not feel it worthy of the studio. When every sequence is satisfactory, and painted on celluloid, it is filmed. The shooting takes a hundred hours or more, by means of a complexly rigged stop motion camera. The final endorsement, as in the major studios, is given the cartoon at a preview at one of the neighbourhood motion-picture theatres. Occasionally, if a sequence fails to get a reaction from the audience it is changed; but, on account of the carefully worked out and synchronised scenario, there is rarely much changed after the final filming of the cartoon.

After four months, or thereabout, of co-operative labour the cartoon is ready for its brief seven minutes on the screen.

Apart from the creation of the cartoon, there is another communalistic factor in the Disney studio, and that is the course in animated art. Any member of the studio may take the course, which usually requires about six months of study.

The author is indebted for much of the material in this article to Dr. Morkovin, an advisor in the story department at the Disney Studio and professor of cinematography at the University of Southern California, where he has recently organized the first competent exhibition of the making of a Disney cartoon.

DOCUMENTARY (3)

THE SYMPHONIC FILM

JOHN GRIERSON

THE SYMPHONIC form is concerned with the orchestration of movement. It sees the screen in terms of flow and does not permit the flow to be broken. Episodes and events if they are included in the action are integrated in the flow. The symphonic form also tends to organise the flow in terms of different movements, *e.g.* movement for dawn, movement for men coming to work, movement for factories in full swing, etc., etc. This is a first distinction.

See the symphonic form as equivalent to the poetic form of, say, Carl Sandburg in "Skyscraper," "Chicago," "The Windy City" and "Slabs of the Sunburnt West." The object is presented as an integration of many activities. It lives by the many human associations and by the moods of the various action sequences which surround it. Sandburg says so with variations of tempo in his description, variations of the mood in which each descriptive facet is presented. We do not ask personal stories of such poetry, for its picture is complete and satisfactory. We need not ask it of documentary. This is a second distinction regarding symphonic form.

These distinctions granted, it is possible for the symphonic form to vary considerably. Basil Wright, for example, is almost exclusively interested in movement, and will build up movement in a fury of design and nuances of design; and for those whose eye is sufficiently trained and sufficiently fine, will convey emotion in a thousand variations on a theme so simple as the portage of bananas (*Cargo from Jamaica*). Some have attempted to relate this movement to the pyrotechnics of pure form, but there never was any such animal. (1) The quality of Wright's sense of movement and of his patterns are distinctively his own and recognisably delicate. As with good painters, there is character in his line and attitude in his composition. (2) There is an overtone in his work which—sometimes after seeming monotony—makes his description uniquely memorable. (3) His patterns invariably weave—not seeming to do so—a positive attitude to the material, which may conceivably relate to (2). The patterns of *Cargo* were more scathing comment on labour at 2d. a hundred bunches (or whatever it is) than mere sociological stricture. His movements—(*a*) easily down; (*b*) horizontal; (*c*) arduously 45° up; (*d*) down again—conceal, or perhaps construct, a comment.

Flaherty once maintained that the east-west contour of Canada was itself a drama. It was precisely a sequence of down, horizontal, 45° up, and down again.

I use Basil Wright as an example of 'movement in itself'—though movement is never in itself—principally to distinguish those others who add either tension elements or poetic elements or atmospheric elements. I have held myself in the past an exponent of the tension category with certain pretention to the others. Here is a simple example of tension from *Granton Trawler*. The trawler is working its gear in a storm. The tension elements are built up with emphasis on the drag of the water, the heavy lurching of the ship, the fevered flashing of birds, the fevered flashing of faces between waves lurches and spray. The trawl is hauled aboard with strain of men and tackle and water. It is opened in a release which comprises equally the release of men, birds and fish. There is no pause in the flow of movement, but something of an effort as between two opposing forces, has been recorded. In a more ambitious and deeper description the tension might have included elements more intimately and more heavily descriptive of the clanging weight of the tackle, the strain on the ship, the operation of the gear under water and along the ground, the scuttering myriads of birds laying off in the gale. The fine fury of ship and heavy weather could have been brought through to touch the vitals of the men and the ship. In the hauling, the simple fact of a wave breaking over the men, subsiding and leaving them hanging on as though nothing had happened, would have brought the sequence to an appropriate peak. The release could have attached to itself images of, say, birds wheeling high, taking off from the ship, and of contemplative, *i.e.* more intimate, reaction on the faces of the men. The drama would have gone deeper by the greater insight into the energies and reactions involved.

Carry this analysis into a consideration of the first part of *Deserter*, which piles up from a sequence of deadly quiet to the strain and fury—and aftermath—of the strike, or of the strike sequence itself, which piles up from deadly quiet to the strain and fury—and aftermath—of the police attack, and you have indication of how the symphonic shape, still faithful to its own peculiar methods, comes to grip with dramatic issue.

The poetic approach is best represented by *Romance Sentimentale* and the last sequence of *Ekstase*. Here there is description without tension, but the moving description is lit up by attendant images. In *Ekstase* the notion of life renewed is conveyed by a rhythmic sequence of labour, but there are also essential images of a woman and child, a young man standing high over the scene, skyscapes and water. The description of the various moods of *Romance Sentimentale*

From Wilfried Basse's new film "So lebt ein Volk" (So lives a Nation). Production: Basse-Film, Berlin-Dahlem.

From "L'Atalante," directed by Jean Vigo from the scenario by Jean Guinée, featuring Dita Parlo and Michel Simon. Montage by Louis Chavance.

is conveyed entirely by images: in one sequence of domestic interior, in another sequence of misty morning, placid water and dim sunlight. The creation of mood, an essential in the symphonic form, may be done in terms of tempo alone, but is better done if poetic images colour it. In a description of night at sea, there are elements enough aboard a ship to build up a quiet and effective rhythm, but a deeper effect might come by reference to what is happening under water or by reference to the strange spectacle of the birds which, sometimes in ghostly flocks, move silently in and out of the ship's lights.

A recent sequence done by Rotha for his new film indicates the distinction between the three different treatments. He describes the loading of a steel furnace and builds a superb rhythm into the shovelling movements of the men. By creating behind them a sense of fire, by playing on the momentary shrinking from fire which comes into these shovelling movements, he would have brought in the elements of tension. He might have proceeded from this to an almost terrifying picture of what steel work involves. On the other hand, by overlaying the rhythm with, say, such posturing or contemplative symbolic figures, as Eisenstein brought into his *Thunder Over Mexico* material, he would have added the elements of poetic image. The distinction is between (*a*) a musical or non-literary method; (*b*) a dramatic method with clashing forces; and (*c*) a poetic, contemplative, and altogether literary method. These three methods may all appear in one film, but their proportion depends naturally on the character of the director—and his private hopes of salvation.

I do not suggest that one form is higher than the other. There are pleasures peculiar to the exercise of movement which in a sense are tougher—more classical—than the pleasures of poetic description, however attractive and however blessed by tradition these may be. The introduction of tension gives accent to a film, but only too easily gives popular appeal because of its primitive engagement with physical issues and struggles and fights. People like a fight, even when it is only a symphonic one, but it is not clear that a war with the elements is a braver subject than the opening of a flower or, for that matter, the opening of a cable. It refers us back to hunting instincts and fighting instincts, but these plainly do not represent the more civilised fields of appreciation.

It is commonly believed that moral grandeur in art can only be achieved, Greek or Shakespearian fashion, after a general laying out of the protagonists, and that no head is unbowed which is not bloody. This notion is a philosophic vulgarity. Of recent years it has been given the further blessing of Kant in his distinction between the æsthetic of pattern and the æsthetic of achievement, and

"wondrous," "exquisite," "like old masters," "like Nature herself." Go back to *The Black Pirate* (1926); to Friese-Greene (1924); to *The Glorious Adventure* (Prizma, 1922); to Gaumont's luxurious three-colour Chronochrome (1913); to Kinemacolour (1911). Read up the testimonials. If Critical Opinion can go into raptures about photochromy on the screen, much readier should the indiscriminate fans be to extol it.

Besides, it is human nature to tolerate imperfections in everything, until something better is put before us. So, if colour reproduction were a vital condition in the moving picture, mechanical crudities could not seriously stand in its way. After all, Nature is not very exacting, apart from the particularity of human complexions. Impossible to hit upon a green, a brown, or a yellow that does not represent some true appearance of a leaf. Then nearly everything the popular eye demands from colour, all its artificialness, all its extravagance—the sensational and the sentimental—can be supplied by quite a clumsy process. A venture like Kinemacolour, by its very evidence of practicability, profitableness and merit, is evidence of limitations not concerned with those factors. To-day also a market could be exploited through the enormous interest and attraction in coloured subjects. But—there is enormous interest and attraction in the movie dramas too. The markets must either be separated or be reconciled.

Colour is not missing in the movies. The real peculiarity is that our intelligence demurs at the presence of colour in a life-like representation, but never at the absence of it. The achievement of black-and-white drawings, photographs, and moving pictures ought to be regarded as a positive achievement. The pure photograph exerts an emotional influence so moving and so instinctive as to be unreached by any other form of picture. It registers some indefinable quality of the subject. It evokes a vivid recognition. More: from the box-office point of view, it is human.

To colour it is to transform it into the dead product of the hand. If it is a portrait of a face intimately known—and a film star's face is intimately known—individuality and personality disappear. Vulgar people take a naïve pride in a coloured enlargement of someone dear to them; but for emotional purposes they are careful to keep a copy in black-and-white.

In so far as this refractoriness of colour disturbs the illusion of realness, it nullifies what is vital in our medium. This is, in a way, the most important part of the problem, but since it leads into a theme far out of our present path, I must be content to assume it is agreed upon, this need of some peculiar realness in the Image Play that is active in prompting a mental reciprocation of real experience.

Why colours seem unreal may be less a psychological than a

visual problem. Not so much a pigmentary problem, either, because any colour reproduction—even paintings, even the best printing processes—have something false about them; and even an actual spectacle can be made to *appear* artificial in its hues.

Colour seems to be an entity in itself. It trespasses on the field of vision. It provides an abstract spectacle imposed over the spectacle concrete. Monochrome allows the eye to come closer, as it were, to concentrate more, to absorb more, to digest more. As infra-red rays, X-rays, and all the other rays afford our vision a means of deeper penetration, so black-and-white photography pierces a fog of light sensations.

The painter gets at the nude in defiance of prude. The sculptor, I contend, goes one better by stripping off the colour as well as the clothes. Colour brings visual indigestion.

These effects add to the troubles of pictorial composition. The eye can have no softer bearing than the tones of light and shade. Colour seeks rather to imprison the vision; and when there are casual, accidental colourings the field is strewn with obstacles, until the eye finally lands in a bunker. Painters are satisfied that they have turned these disadvantages to their own advantage. Lowbrows, failing such satisfaction, prefer paintings to be over-coloured, so that at least they can extract the sensation of colour as colour.

Circumstances of the cinema—which I shall *not* apologise for—inevitably widen the argument. A canvas, usually, is comfortably within one's field of vision, and the light around you relieves the sight. The cinema screen necessarily fills the whole field of vision and annihilates consciousness of all other existence. This stresses an unnatural condensation of colour, just as there is an unnatural condensation of sound within the talkie frame. Free of colour, the black-and-white shadows on the screen join swifter the shadows of the hall. We can make a colour amalgam around the picture, but experience shows that the mind makes a much better settlement if left confronted with the ultimatum of one uncompromising boundary of sight.

Colour enthusiasts refer gleefully to the "pull" of gorgeous posters and magazine covers. When, however, you consider that these draw the eye to themselves amid a world of competing lights and forms, you get an idea of the force we are playing with in the cinema confines. Signal-lights also ought to warn us in more senses than one.

The chromotechnics of the screen cast me into a dungeon, with darkness and suffocation. Lost is the very essence of cinema, its space, and freedom, and light. Nothing like it on earth; although in the weird world underseas Technicolour seems singularly apt. Ignore the limitations of colour photography. Remember that in certain circumstances of vision, colours will always tend to denaturalise

themselves. Above all, daylight in real existence, apart from its local decompositions into hue, prevails imponderously around every visible thing.

Screw up your eyes at a stage scene, squeeze out all the light you can spare. The result can be uncannily like a Technicoloured interior, even to the queer complexions. If you try the same trick on a Technicolour picture, the effect is an improvement! Colours become lighter and more distinguished, the flesh tints especially appearing more life-like.

Artificially coloured films are superior in their preservation of light. There is not that effect of depression, not to say oppression, to be found in natural colour photography. Moreover, the simpleness of the tints produces at least an elementary harmony, and often a finer delicacy. Our autocoloured reproductions should be severely diluted, by fair means or foul.

As there are physical, so there are mental conditions in actual life to modify the impertinence as well as the exuberance of colour. The want of such protection makes itself evident in a coloured reproduction of any kind. What should be latent, what is irrelevant, is all forced without mercy into one's perception. A man can go a life-time without learning the true colours of a friend (symbolicalists, please note). He can fall in love with a girl with only the haziest notion whether her eyes are blue or grey. In a picture, these colours merely advertise themselves as abstract patterns. Often it is asserted that we cannot dream in colour—a fallacy, mind you, but not without a foundation of truth.

To remark further the cinema's distinctions. Animated, the subject moves as well as the eye, and two motions have to correspond. An idiot wearing a scarlet scarf may walk from the foreground and far into the distance, and drag the helpless eye in chains behind him. Colours of stationary subjects (composing the bulk of the scene) mislead in another manner. They tend to make everything inert. Even perched on a moving object, colour appears to lack the agility of form. At times the forms seem to be struggling to move themselves beneath the weight of the colours. The dragging tendency is aggravated, I consider, by the known inclination of colours to jump into discrepant focal planes.

Nature demonstrates everywhere that colour is static in suggestion. Each creature loses an apparent ability of motion as it increases its colours. A peacock could never look swift. Such inaptitude is, indeed, utilised ecologically.* If this is so, it causes a serious

* With certain natural colour processes still more fatigue might be supposed to result from the separation of the complementary images into successive frames. On the other hand it is a fact, I believe, that with colour the eye allows more latitude in a synthesis of animation. Incidentally this may point to a persistency in the colour sensation that is objectionable in other ways.

retardation, not only in locomotion but in the finer mobility of facial expression. Ultimately, there is a similar influence on the *tempo*.

Brief, too, our changing scenes; and varying their scales. In the long run the all-coloured film can be more monotonous than the monotone film. It reveals yet more that real life does not permit an observation of colours commensurate with that lavished on us by the photochromatic drama. Hundreds upon hundreds of coloured records are thrown at us without remission, and the eye has no source of escape. No matter how different the subjects, the hues tend to become a stream of abstract, satiating sensations. It is like music trying to dispense with silence.

Undoubtedly there are technical improvements to anticipate, especially if we bear in mind that even objections against elaborateness of equipment and operation in the theatre are hardly valid in face of the talkie manœuvre. Observe, though, that colour has not yet provided in the box-office that irresistible lever that sound provided to make such an upheaval possible.

And that, first and finally, is what I want to impress. Claude Friese-Greene did once say that picture-goers would have to be educated to an appreciation of colour films. This was corroboration from a source where I least expected to find it; for, of all the colourites, inventors who have devoted everything they have to a practical solution of the problem are the ones I can most excuse for assuming that the public is clamouring for a solution.

If it had not been generally assumed, without leave to question, that picture-goers would turn away from black-and-white movies to coloured movies as greedily as a schoolboy turns away from bread to chocolate, inventors and investors would have saved a vast amount of effort and money. They would have tackled the problem forwards instead of backwards. They would have recognised that, even in the case of an article definitely desired by the public, application rather than cheapness, ingenuity or publicity, is the factor that finally counts in the market. Mechanically and commercially, as well as dramatically, coloured film has been badly mishandled.

"Awaiting the technical solution"! That is the stalemate position our colour was in ten, say twenty, years ago. Our first task is to make colour *wanted* in the cinema. Solve that problem, and the inventors will have in their hands the only weapon they really need for their advancement. Technical perfection comes last, not first. The moving picture proved it. The gramophone proved it. The radio proved it. The talkies proved it. I cannot think of any scope in popular entertainment that has not proved it.

CONVERSATION PIECES

ETHICS FOR MOVIE

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI
STUART LEGG

Cavalcanti.—One of the chief difficulties which confronted me during my recent work in France was that of assembling an ideal team. Some of those working with me would be intellectuals; each was determined to have his own say and his own way in the making of the picture. Others would be hard-working, level-headed technicians, too modést to push their ideas to the fore, and apt to be overwhelmed by the hard-boiled commercial executives. It is extremely difficult to get together a well-balanced team where each man is content to have equal say in his own *métier* in developing the spirit of the film.

Legg.—But if every responsible person is to have equal say, an impossible conflict will immediately arise. A single authority must have final word, and the obvious authority is the director.

Cavalcanti.—I don't believe in the director in the position of dictator. The best American films—Chaplin and Lloyd—are the result of close team-work. The same applies to the great Russian films; *Potemkin* was not the work of Eisenstein alone, but of a competent team of technicians working with him in the spirit of the film. The best directors are those who can draw the individual ability from each member of their staff and direct the sum total towards the subject in hand.

Legg.—I admit that there's a great deal of nonsense talked about 'self-expression' in the director, but there must be a point at which his own methods emerge and assume control.

Cavalcanti.—No director can make a film by himself. He is dependent at every step upon skilled and specialised technicians. A good film is that which in some way allows the skill of each technician to bring out some special quality of its subject, and *not* the special quality of its director. If a director is determined to reveal his own personality, he should indulge in one of the recognised arts.

Legg.—Cinema is still in its baby stages. Until it becomes more mature it's idle to lay down laws which may soon be out of date.

Cavalcanti.—True, where technical development is concerned. But all the signs point to film-making becoming more and more the domain of technical experts. Therefore it is safe to say that cinema

can in no case be the expression of one man's personality, but must represent the achievement of collective effort. One of the essential elements of art is personal expression of the artist. So cinema can never be an art.

Legg.—That's the kind of statement that takes the spice out of life. For our little reputations' sakes it is necessary that we should wear the sacred halo of artistry. Otherwise our dignity and self-respect may be seriously impaired.

Cavalcanti.—But isn't it true?

Legg.—Perfectly.

Cavalcanti.—Another essential of art is equilibrium—*état de repos.* That is, all art must take into account a happening at a given moment—even architecture and music. Film cannot do this; its whole essence is movement and progression.

Legg.—How, then, are we going to define cinema? All manner of persons gather in the *salle obscure*—the worker, the academe, the housewife, the æsthete. What function does it fulfil in their lives?

Cavalcanti.—Is it the need to share a common sexual intimacy with Garbo or Chevalier?

Legg.—Is it the necessity to gather together in a mystical atmosphere to seek consolation for worldly ills?

Cavalcanti.—Don't you think that the ever-similar arrangement of the programme—comedy, cartoon, newsreel, organ, feature—satisfies an everyday need for ritual?

Legg.—It looks as though it were a public gathering to indulge in waves of mass beatific emotion.

Cavalcanti.—Doesn't the word religion come from the Latin *religare*?

Legg.—Exactly—to bind together. And no religion is so universal.

Cavalcanti.—The *salle obscure* binds people together in a 'dim religious light.'

Legg.—Most religions prescribe a sensual adoration of at least one of their deities.

Cavalcanti.—The need for a common refuge from the world is still deeply rooted in all human beings.

Legg.—And the craving for an outward visible symbol for an inward spiritual act.

Cavalcanti.—But the worship of stars by the fans is as heretical as the worship of directors by movie-æsthetes.

Legg.—Surely it will be repudiated, as Protestantism repudiated the adoration of the Catholic saints.

Cavalcanti.—And again, the present preoccupation with mythical figures is a perversion. The whole emphasis of the cinema must fall upon its subject.

Legg.—The business of cinema is to crystallise an attitude to a sociological trend—and to see that it does not betray this universal trust.

Cavalcanti.—The crime of the commercials is that they use the cinema as a drug to maintain their best of all possible worlds. The frivolity of the pseudo-intellectuals avoids any urgent issue whatever.

Legg.—All religions become parasites at that point where they extort money from their followers on false pretences. Unfortunately, the cinema has made a cunning practice of that art from the day of its foundation.

Cavalcanti.—How strange it is that every nation creates a censorship of film morals while no international convocation exists to ensure that the film-going public is not fleeced. . . .

Legg.—. . . when the proper duty of cinema (in terms of Reality) is to be the work of the community for the community.

Cavalcanti.—In any case, Fascism, as the political achievement of individualism, can never pervert the cinema to its own ends, since it bears no relation to collective spirit.

Legg.—No; the subjects of modern life are collective subjects. The future of movie will lie in interpreting them.

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CINEMATIC DESIGN, by Leonard Hacker (Boston: Photographic Pub. Co., $2.50). A valuable and intelligent discussion of the principles of form, rhythm, and relativity for amateur film-makers, illustrated with a collection of short scenarios remarkable for a quaint and consistent use of the dissolve in place of the cut.

THE CHILD MANUELA. By Christa Winsloe. (London: Chapman and Hall. 7*s.* 6*d.*) The story of the film, *Madchen in Uniform*, was originally conceived and written as a novel, though play and film appeared first. The novel, now published for the first time, deals largely with the life of the child Manuela at a period earlier than that which the film portrays. It is interesting both for its intrinsic merit and for comparison with Leontine Sagan's film treatment of its theme.

CATALOGUE OF THE G.P.O. FILM LIBRARY. (London: Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Gratis.) Should be in the hands of all organisers of non-theatrical performances. In an introduction, Sir Kingsley Wood explains why this national asset is maintained by the Post Office.

MODERN ART (London: F. J. Ward, 3 Baker Street, W.1. 1*s.*) A profusely illustrated catalogue of impressionist and post-impressionist painting, a study of which is essential to all interested in modern visual art. Copies of the prints illustrated are obtainable in excellent coloured reproductions.

THE FILM ABROAD

GERMANY ON THE SCREEN

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

In a long, systematic journey through Germany, Wilfried Basse, known as the producer of *Markt in Berlin* (Market in Berlin) and *Abbruch und Aufbau eines Hauses* (Fall and Rise of a House), has gathered a great mass of material, out of which the film on Germany *So lebt ein Volk* (So lives a Nation) is created. Basse does not consider a geographical arrangement of the material satisfactory. His film is not merely a substitute for a journey through Germany. It gives not only a *picture* of the country, but makes its nature and characteristics comprehensible. It emphasises essentials, creates types, according to Kant's principle: "Vision without comprehension is empty; comprehension without vision is blind." From what angle is this gigantic subject approached? Different classifications, sharp contrasts, as city and country, poor and rich, work and pleasure, past and present, are useful and necessary, but none is so predominant as to form the basis of such a film. The arrangement of the material and the classification under various headings, as children, church-buildings, vehicles, domestic animals, etc. (this Basse did for the preparation of the *montage*), is a pedantic combination of related details, which is useful as a first survey of the whole, but does not evolve a principle of montage.

The mutual influence of natural picture material and organizing mind must develop an organic structure that has a strong, rigid skeleton but at the same time gives an impression of the free character of things grown in nature. Some groupings are cleverly formed, others quite naturally felt and left unchanged. Basse's material, for instance, contains certain complex groups which can be joined to the rest without further arrangement. There are themes like the Ruhr district and its panorama of chimneys, its rolling-mills, its iron-foundries; the strenuous life of its people in the shadow of the coal bings; the great port of Hamburg; and various small themes, as a procession, a creamery, a week-end colony, five-o'clock tea at the seaside. On the other hand, a systematic arrangement is just as essential for the structure of this film. Basse wants to show how the style of living in former times is still affecting modern life—how big a part the past still plays in the modern world. There is the smallholder, cultivating his fields with the primitive implements of a prehistoric time,

beside mowers, threshing machines, tractors, and cattle farms. Or there are historical buildings, lively reminders of the past.

Basse boldly frees himself from geographical connections and conditions. He constructs, for instance, a concentrated picture of a medieval town by joining photographs which have been taken at different places in Germany. He does not simply add picture to picture, but interweaves their single motives of action in such a way as to create the impression of a lively unity. Different views in different Gothic towns are photographed; the various scenes fitted into the general picture to embody the idea of a Gothic town, which, as it is shown, does not really exist. The façade of a cathedral may be taken in Lübeck, the interior in Stralsund, but in spite of that, the union of things related in age and style creates an intense representation, because the best subjects, angles, lighting, are chosen to suit the composition. Such a principle of montage work puts aside those objects which are well known and visited by the sightseer, because such pictures would bring the audience to a false reaction, to a question Basse does not like asked—"Where did you shoot that?"

The lively interrelation of different principles of structure allows a consistent line to be taken, a dynamic development. From the prehistoric forms of a primitive economic system the film leads historically up over the Gothic style to Renaissance, from baroque to rococo, from the *Biedermeierzeit* to the complacency of present middle-class society, the provincial character of which makes possible the crescendo of a modernised city's activity. The description of the city is completed by showing its sources of power, slaughter-house, produce factory, post office, traffic. Town life necessitates recreation. The film takes us to resorts and week-end places, and this leads up with another crescendo to the great centres of life such as sea-ports and industrial regions, which show their characteristic features not only in their prosperity but in the misery and strain of a workman's life. This again leads up to a concise report of a modern economic crisis, of unemployment, and finishes with promising pictures of the latest labour services and reorganisation of welfare centres.

Basse does not want his film to be accompanied by explanatory remarks. Helped only by a few concise titles and the music, the visual composition of the film is intended to make its own meaning clear.

Wolfgang Zeller contributes the music which reflects the visual moods harmoniously and unites the ever-changing pictures on the screen. It emphasises sharp contrasts—from the gay to the serious, from the complacent to the hustle. Thus picture and sound produce a constant variety which holds the spectator's interest and stresses the essential.

Translated by MARGRET KAPPELS.

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA is the third largest consuming country of British and American films. Few European films get shown, and picture-goers view the world almost entirely through the eyes of Hollywood and Elstree. The Commonwealth Film Censor sees to it that our morals are closely guarded, and when a foreign film does creep through, it is, more often than not, hacked to pieces. An obscure Sydney theatre, now closed, put on *The Blue Angel*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*, *Cain*, *The Last Company*, and several Ufa pictures. *The Russian Five-Year Plan* and *Turksib* are the only Soviet films we have seen, and even they were nearly excluded because of their "Communistic and propaganda tendencies." The limited population of Australia makes it financially impossible to import original versions of foreign films, and thus Australia is many years behind in cinema education. If we were given the opportunity of special screenings by "art." theatres, as in other countries, we would take our films more seriously. At present we are denied that enviable experience. LEON S. STONE.

HUNGARY

AFTER TWO years of slow development, the Hunnia Studios at Budapest have started production on a big scale. The production of films in this country is handicapped by the fact that there are only about two hundred cinemas. Since the seceding countries have entirely blocked the import of Hungarian pictures, there is no outside market. This means that the production costs of a picture can be earned only if it is made in multi-lingual versions.

On the other hand, producing costs are considerably smaller in Hungary than in other countries, because the Hungarian Government, to foster national production, allows every producer making a Hungarian version of his film to use the Hunnia Studios (which belong to an institution of the State—the Film-Fond) free of charge. Production costs are thus estimated to be 50 per cent. smaller than in any other country.

It is well known that a number of prominent authors, scenarists, directors and stars are Hungarians. Alexander Korda, Lajos Birô, Michael Kertész, Poul Fejös, and Vilma Bánky are all Hungarians.

The Hunnia Studios are quite near to Budapest, the capital of Hungary, with open country attached to them. They are equipped with Tobis-Klang sound apparatus. The film-developing and printing machines are mostly De Brie and Erneman makes. The cutting rooms are equipped with Askania and Hungarian cutting desks.

Two stages, 72 by 80 feet and 85 by 100 feet, are in the main building of Hunnia Studios, which also comprises about thirty dressing-rooms, with cold and hot water.

Last year was started with the Hungarian and Roumanian versions of *The Ghost Train*, by Lajos Biro, followed by *The Vine*, a short Hungarian folk-play. In May and June a great patriotic picture was produced by Sári Fedák, a famous actress of vaudeville and Hungarian plays. In July German Universal Pictures, a branch institution of Carl Laemmle's, was producing a comedy (*Skandal in Budapest*), with Franciska Gaál and Poul Hörbiger in Hungarian and German versions. The most promising picture yet produced is *Rokoczi Marsch*, in Hungarian and German versions. The cast includes Gustav Fröhlich, Tibor Halmay, Puffi Huszár, and Oscar Beregi. In the Hungarian version many of the best stage-actors of Hungary are acting. The picture is of Hungarian national character, set in the most lovely Hungarian country-side, with the background of the manœuvres of the Hungarian army. The picture was directed by Stephan Székely, and the music was written by Poul Abraham and includes some ancient folk-songs. It has had the greatest success of any Hungarian picture. The producers are at the present considering the possibilities of making an English version.

F. R. ORBÁN.

SOUTH AFRICA

NOTWITHSTANDING GREAT difficulties in procuring suitable films and a place for showing with proper equipment, the film society movement seems to be gaining ground. A film society has been formed at Wellington in the Cape, while similar movements are on foot in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, and at Durban. The Cape Film Society showed fragments from the first part of Ivens' Zuider Zee film. A short film, *Boy*, by the Dutch cineaste, Dick Laan, was enthusiastically received. The Dutch *avant-garde* seems to have found a firm footing with certain cultural societies here, and it is almost certain that Dutch films, like Teunissen's *William of Orange*, will attract a good deal of attention. A very interesting evening was provided when Vice-Admiral E. R. Evans, at the request of the Cape Film Society, gave a complementary talk during the screening of Byrd's South Pole film. The Cape Film Society closed its season this year with a joint function in collaboration with the French Circle of the University of Cape Town, when *Joan of Arc* was presented.

The Minister of the Interior has decided to establish a film archives in which will be deposited films of historical or cultural

interest relating to South Africa. Attempts are being made to trace a short film made of the late President Kruger of the Transvaal Republic. Edgar Hyman, who made several film records during the Boer War is in charge of the work of collecting these films for deposit in the new S.A. Film Archives.

The Film-Radio Commission of the S.A. Akademie vir Taal, Lettere en Kuns, a cultural society, has decided to award the Academy's medal for 1933 to C. P. Beyers in recognition of his work in connection with film-making. The Academy also recommended that the Carnegie grant for the study of film technique be awarded to Mr. Beyers. Mr. Beyers is an amateur who has made several interesting film studies of the Kruger National Park.

H. R. VAN DER POEL.

MISCELLANY

ART AND REPRODUCTION

RUDOLF ARNHEIM, in his article, "Film and Radio," was "tempted to speak of . . . an entirely new branch of art which might be called *reproductive art.*" It is a little to be regretted that he yielded to the temptation so easily. For, after all, is such a term justifiable?

Under the term "reproductive art" Arnheim includes film, photography, radio, gramophone, and sound-film. In the first place, take still photography. A photographer may proceed in either of three ways: he may take his camera about with him on chance and snap pictures on the inspiration of the moment; or he may be struck by a subject, decide on the best conditions to take it, and then take it; or a subject may occur to him independently of anything external, which he then reproduces in reality and photographs. All these methods of approach are also known to the painter, with appropriate modifications. The painter may be suddenly struck by the pictorial possibilities of a scene and make a hasty sketch, which is elaborated at leisure; or he may find a scene which attracts him, take his easel and paint the picture on the spot; or he may make up a picture entirely out of his head, and reproduce it on canvas directly (not being under the obligation of the photographer to reproduce it first in reality, although he may get help from models). In each case there is first a mental image, and finally a picture. The photograph follows the same laws of composition as the painting, appeals to the same kind of sensibility, and can be judged by the same standards. It is true that it is bad art to make a photograph look like

a painting, or a painting like a photograph; but only as it is bad architecture to make a reinforced concrete factory look like a Doric temple. It is a question of media. But, if this is the case, can we say not merely that photography and painting are different arts, but that they belong to different classes of art?

Coming to films: is there art in the simple reproduction of a stage play or variety turn? Obviously not; and the result is not true film. But is there art in the reproduction of a Mickey Mouse cartoon? Is there selection of angles, selection of viewpoint, or anything else? There cannot be. The camera's only job is to reproduce the object (that is, the drawing) set before it as clearly as possible. Yet the result is admitted by most people to be true film. Are there, then, two kinds of film, belonging to widely separated genera of arts?

Take the third case: radio. Reproduction of a piece of music is admittedly not radio art. Reproduction of a stage play, by analogy with films, is unlikely to be so. But according to Arnheim, Goethe's "Faust" is more a radio play than a stage drama, and therefore a radio production of "Faust" is radio art. What difference between the stage and radio production is so essential that it transmutes "Faust" into a different kind of art? Or is it not the case that radio drama is simply an improved way of obtaining the same effect on the spectator as in stage drama?

A play, "Easter 1916," produced at the Dublin Gate Theatre, was mostly made up of speeches off-stage. These were accompanied by a simple and thematically unimportant, though pleasing, visual setting, which remained substantially unchanged throughout. All the information, and nearly all the emotion, was conveyed verbally. Are we to believe that if this play were broadcast (which would need no change except the elimination of the setting) the effect would be something different not only in degree, but in kind?

Photography and painting, radio plays and stage drama, cartoon-film and normal story-film are not different arts but different techniques. The only new art is that of the film, and it is new because a succession of visual images cannot be created without the help of some mechanical apparatus. The only new departure made possible by radio, gramophone, and sound-strip is the orchestration of natural sounds, and this will very probably prove to be a branch of music. The effect of the spoken word is not magically transmuted simply because it happens to come through a loud-speaker.

The film uses reality because it cannot help doing so, and the reality is not the first thing. The first thing is the image in the mind, and the reality is then chosen so that the resulting photograph will resemble, as closely as possible, the original image.

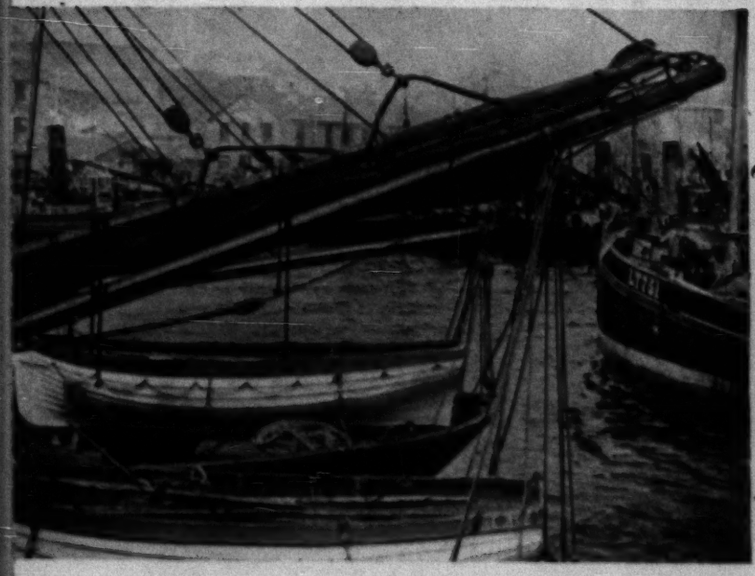
G. F. DALTON.

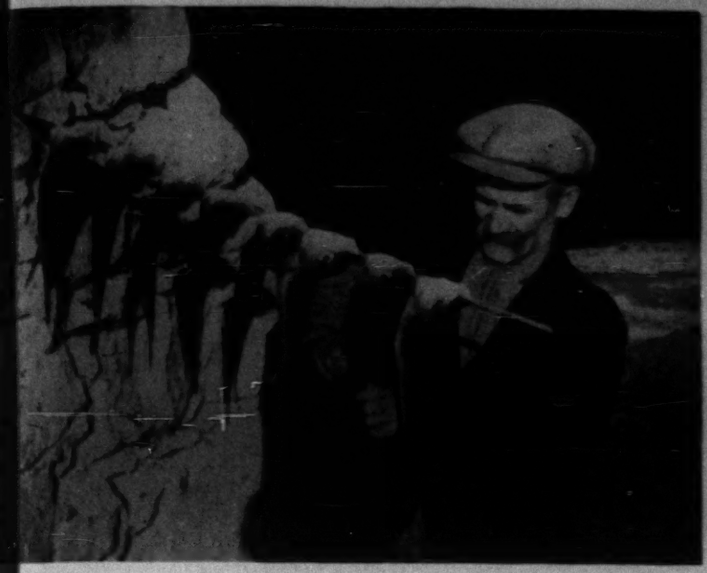
Advance stills from "Kongo Raid," a London Films production directed by Zoltan Korda. The exteriors for the film, which is adapted from Edgar Wallace's "Sanders of the River," were taken in Uganda and the Congo. The photography is by Osmond Borrodaile and Bernard Browne.

A SHETLAND LYRIC

THE RUGGED ISLAND, stills of which appear on this and the opposite page, is an admirable example of what the independent film-maker can do with courage and initiative. Produced, directed and photographed by Jenny Brown, who has already made several short films of life in Shetland, it is a study of changing conditions in the Islands and of the dissatisfaction of youth with the old standards of living. Certain weaknesses in the scenario are compensated for by the naturalness of the acting and a fine sense of composition and form which gives Miss Brown's photography of the sea-girt, rocky landscape an impressive beauty.

The importance of *The Rugged Island* is that it is a personal achievement, conceived and fashioned almost single-handed, free from any sort of commercial domination, and pointing the way to a method of individual film-making considerably nearer the ideal than is possible under the usual conditions of commercial production.





THE RUGGED ISLAND

THE SCENARIO of *The Rugged Island* was built around two crofter families, the idea behind the story being to express through these selected lives the story of all the Shetland Island people: the hard struggle for a living; the desire of youth, to whom closer contact with the rest of the world through wireless and newspapers has brought unrest and dissatisfaction with a mere existence, to try their luck in a wider sphere; and the difficulties that bar their way, lack of actual money, and the dependence of the old folk, who have grown prematurely old in their battle to win food and clothing from sea and land.

We were a film unit of ten with very little filming experience, but

we knew what results we wanted and considered amongst ourselves the best way to get them. The directing and camera work was my job. I had one Eyemo camera with which I had shot five thousand feet of interest film the previous summer. John Gilbertson, an islander, as well as acting the hero of the story was the practical man-of-all-work, and did anything from mending the camera to constructing all the sets for interior shots. The heroine, Enga S. Stout, took on a variety of jobs, from whitewashing the walls of the house to leading the borrowed cow from its home to the set when needed. The other members of the cast lent a hand when necessary, and the old folk were always ready and willing to play their part when they were needed.

Weather, fortunately, was exceptionally good, and the northern atmosphere steadily clear, for I shot almost consistently with a K2 filter at 8 from May until November, when I had to open up to 5.6 or 4, though I very often still clung to the favourite K2 filter.

The croft one family lived on was used as their background in the film. For the other family a derelict house was repaired and thatched and the land retrieved from the hillside. For the interiors another ruin, five miles away, was converted into a very home-like "but" room. This room had to act in turn as the "but" of three crofters' houses, a difficulty which was overcome by manufacturing three different types of fireplace, changing whitewashed walls to wall-paper, and varying furniture, photographs, texts, clocks, dishes, etc.

As the film came back developed, the rough first cutting was done on dull days in a deserted church hall converted into a studio, and the final cutting was done in the south when the film was completed. Cutting finally your own stuff I find the hardest part of filming. Besides that, it is almost impossible to forget all that went to make each shot and see the film as a stranger; to completely cut out those shots and scenes it took days of hard work to get is almost physically painful. When the cuts are made, of course, one wonders why one ever hesitated.

There are thousands of stories in Scotland and England for the independent film producer. Camera instinct, capital, and common sense are the chief essentials. It's expensive, of course, profiting by your own mistakes, but at least you remember them. There is one very important business point—if you want to market your stuff, make certain beforehand the boundary lines of each market, documentary, etc., and keep within them. Otherwise you may have lovely material, but no one will handle it. JENNY BROWN

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

FACT OR FICTION?

FORSYTH HARDY

AFTER *Henry VIII*, the deluge. The remarkable and unexpected success of Korda's spectacular experiment with history has sent his fellow-producers scurrying to their text-books, there to search for romantic heroes and heroines with traits of character sufficiently and suitably startling to make the story of their lives attractive on the screen. The search is taking the course we expected, and in addition to four versions of the life of Mary Queen of Scots (!), we are to have Charles II, Louis XVI and Napoleon, Queen Elizabeth, Marie Antoinette and Nell Gwynn. The list is representative rather than complete, and does not include the less credible rumours: Clive Brook as Julius Cæsar and Frederic March as Antony.

It ought to be recognised that this sudden interest in historical characters does not have its source in a disinterested desire among the film producers to educate the movie millions about the events of the past. Enviously watching the success of *Henry VIII*, they have realised that history, made to measure for the screen, can be attractive romantic material; and that the public will come, in crowds and uncritically, to see the stars as kings and queens and princes. As with all but the exceptional film in the cinema as we know it, the aim is entertainment: it is not to revive documentary evidence or to provide illustrations for the history text-books.

Has the film, then, no responsibility towards history? Complete and exact historical accuracy, though preferable when possible, is not to be pursued as an end in itself. "There is nothing more futile," Korda has written, "than to attempt to satisfy the painstaking exactitude of the expert." An example of an unreasonable demand for accuracy came recently from a critic who protested that only one of the characters in *Henry VIII*, Anne of Cleves, bore any recognisable resemblance to her original. But it is patently ridiculous to expect a film producer to secure a cast exactly similar in face and physique to the historical characters being represented. Nor is complete historical accuracy always possible. It has been pointed out, for example, that the historical facts and recorded dialogue in connection with the encounter between Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves would not pass any censor in the world.

Of real importance, however, are the distinctive spirit of the character and the general atmosphere of the period. The accurate

representation and re-creation of those must be pursued and is to be praised. If there is to be only a superficial resemblance to the original, then the film has no justifiable claim to the historical names and associations (and, incidentally, publicity value), and is no better than any other costume melodrama which is content with the cardboard kings and queens of Ruritania and Arcadia.

There is a social reason why the grossly-distorting historical film is to be condemned. Such is the composition of the movie audience that the majority will be unable from their own knowledge, to compare the impression given with the historical facts; and thus what is related on the screen will come to represent their entire knowledge of the incidents and characters described. Where the description is accurate—except perhaps for minor errors apparent only to the expert—the result will be educative and praiseworthy; but where the description is grossly inaccurate the result will be a regrettable dissemination of false information.

From this point of view, the quarter's two chief historical films are hardly faultless. In *Catherine the Great* we find no evidence of a ruthlessly ambitious woman who was probably a party to the murder of her husband, and who proceeded to rule thereafter with the brutality typical of the period. In *Queen Christina* we find a daughter of Gustavus Adolphus whose abdication to join a young Spanish envoy comes as a complete surprise to her people, and is accompanied by none of the sordid preliminary discussions recorded in history. I leave it to the experts to decide whether or not the producers are entitled to invite us to see Catherine of Russia and Christina of Sweden or whether they would have been more honest to claim no more than Ruritania as the background for some costumed romance.

Consideration of *Catherine the Great* apart, the quarter has produced no outstanding British films. *Waltzes from Vienna* has revealed Hitchcock's craftsmanship to be as expert as always, but the achievement of the film, an adaptation of the spectacular musical play, was limited from the beginning. *Red Ensign* has the virtue of being based on an original story. Handled with a sense of the theme's importance, the film might have told impressively the story of British shipbuilding, but Gaumont-British, ignoring the real-life drama of the delayed Cunarder on the Clyde, have been content to use the shipyards as a mere background for a rapid melodrama. Similarly, *The Song of the Plough*, though it sets its drama in the English countryside and takes some notice of the contemporary economic situation, is treated so ineptly that it fails to come alive. We are still no nearer to undertaking the task of "telling the rest of the world the truth about Britain"—a shortcoming about which Eric Knight so properly protested in his "Synthetic America."

Accomplishment in this connection is still limited to the shorter documentaries; but the effect of these is not to be written-off as negligible. The remarkable popularity of the films produced by the E.M.B. Film Unit is beginning to alter the outlook of the commercial producer to documentary. Those earlier films, at present being exhibited throughout the country, include *Industrial Britain*, by Grierson and Flaherty, which, in a series of intelligently conceived and expressively photographed sequences, convincingly argues that behind the smoke and the steam of modern industry there is always the craftsman, and that Britain's industrial supremacy is built up on a centuries-old tradition of craftsmanship. Two films by Basil Wright, *The Country Comes to Town* and *O'er Hill and Dale*, have the lyrical quality that has been apparent in all of Wright's work. The latter gives a simple, clear-cut impression of the meaning of Spring to the shepherd—the anxieties, the dangers, the rewards. In this film Wright has caught, with an effectiveness only a Scotsman can appreciate, the peculiar atmosphere of the cold, grey, empty uplands of Southern Scotland. Also among the E.M.B. documentaries now being generally exhibited is Arthur Elton's *Upstream*, an illuminating impression of the salmon trek from the sea to the breeding-grounds. Here Elton, forestalling Pudovkin, makes effective use of the close-up in time, grading the leaping salmon in various degrees of slow motion and thus securing some curious and interesting emphases. These films, at least, have begun the task of showing Britain on the screen. Their success will surely persuade the producers that modern London can be as interesting on the screen as Old Vienna, and that there is no need to go to the ends of the earth when drama is waiting on the doorstep.

The quarter is more interesting if not more distinctive for *Thunder Over Mexico*. Paul Rotha discusses two important aspects of the film's exhibition. For the rest, it may be recorded that the film as we see it is little more than a Mexican Bad Man tale of the rape of one girl and the execution of three peons, with a prologue and epilogue scrappily descriptive of the emergence of a new Mexico. Without the control of the mind originally conceiving the theme, the film has neither coherence nor conviction. The style, too, is impossible to associate with the director of *Potemkin*.

America's films of the quarter are odd in their variety. They include *Little Women*, which has been welcomed as "a complete joy" by one critic who thinks it "simple [and] sincere to the spirit of a gorgeously sentimental race." The film certainly reproduces, to the last sniff, the last sob, every drop of the sentimentality which has made the novel an established best-seller. In complete contrast is the advanced sophistication of Lubitsch's *Design for Living*. It is hard to find a common strain also in two such films as *Alice in Won-*

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derland and *The Bowery*. The first is an efficient but pedestrian adaptation of a fantastic theme calling for imagination and resource to be effective on the screen; the second is a broad comedy of life in the Bowery towards the end of last century, a completely a-moral concoction of sadism and sentiment. Meanwhile, the stream of musical films from Hollywood continues unabated with *The Cat and the Fiddle*, *Wonder Bar* and *Roman Scandals* on the crest of an on-coming wave.

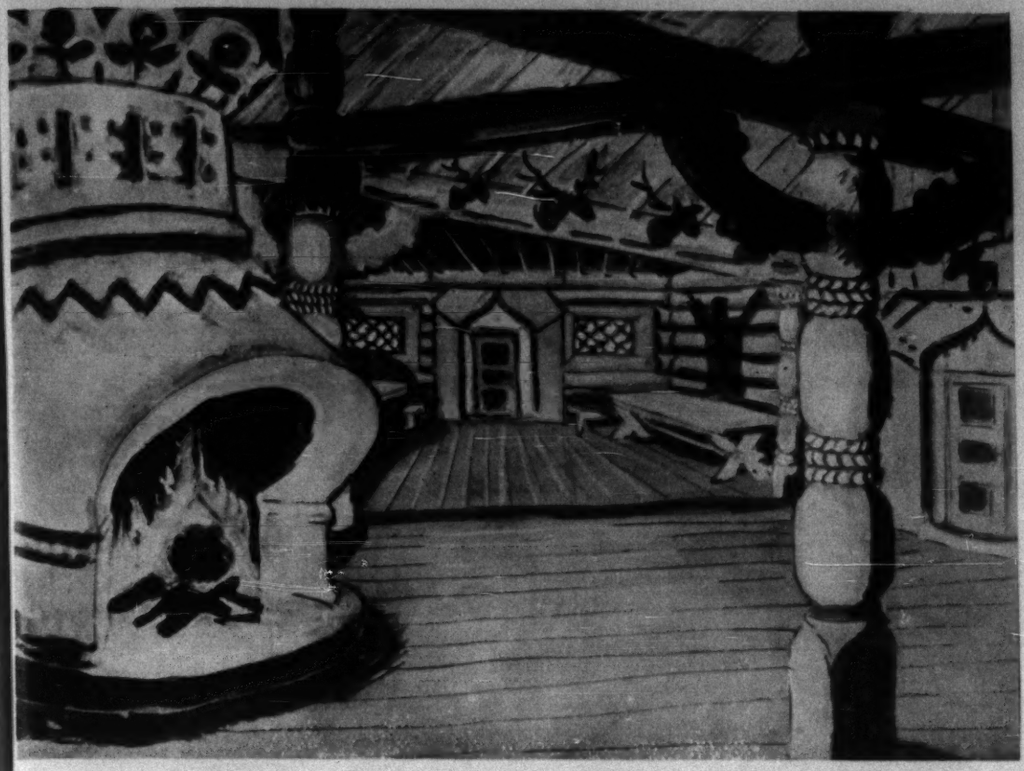
THUNDER OVER MEXICO

Production: Upton Sinclair and friends. Photography: Edouard Tissé. Assembling: Sol Lesser. Music: Hugo Riesenfeld. Distribution: Zenifilms. Length: 6690 feet.

THE STORM over Eisenstein and Sinclair and their joint Mexican catastrophe has by now almost blown itself out, and I do not intend to continue the argument for either side when so much has already been printed by people more familiar with the actual facts than myself. Some day, I suppose, someone will divulge the whole story. Meanwhile, I cordially commend you to Ivor Montagu's summing-up of the case in "The New Statesman" (Jan. 20). It remains only for us to condole with Upton Sinclair for the immense sum of money (not his friends', I hope) he must be spending in writing letters in defence of himself; with Eisenstein for the rôle of martyr imposed upon his shaggy head by his youthful well-wishers; and with ourselves for not seeing what might have been a film among films.

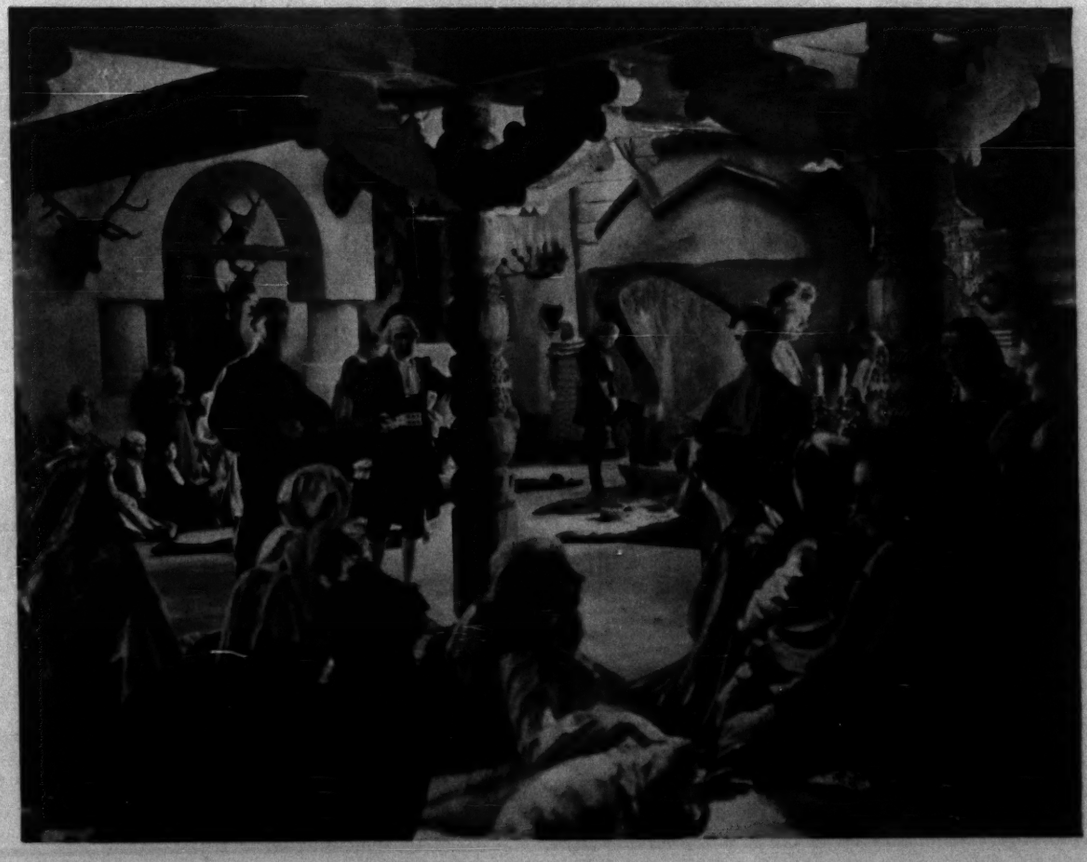
You will agree that no useful purpose can be served in criticising what appears on the English and American screens as Eisenstein's picture, for its traveloguesque cutting by Lesser and its synthetic music by Riesenfeld make the sugary images dull going. Only two results of the picture's showing need concern us here. One, that Eisenstein's name should be dragged in the slime of American showmanship before a public unacquainted with the facts; and two, that heavy filtered skies can get the critics twittering as only critics can.

Can nothing be done to prevent the advertisement of a director's name in connection with a picture when he has withdrawn his hand? There is surely urgent need of a protection committee for directors who have fallen foul of their producers and who wish to withdraw all responsibility for the film put before the public as their own. Such are the conditions of film-making to-day that every important director would subscribe. It should be made possible in such a case as *Thunder Over Mexico* for Eisenstein to have caused Sinclair



Above. One of the sketches prepared by Vincent Korda for the settings of "Catherine the Great."

Below. A corresponding still from the film, taken from the opposite side—showing the accurate reproduction of the design. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. is standing by the open fire and Gerald du Maurier beside one of the pillars.



Greta Garbo in "Queen Christina," a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production directed by Rouben Mamoulian from the scenario by Salka Viertel and H. M. Harwood. The photography is by William Daniels.

to remove his name from the picture before it was given a public showing. The Soviet is not alone in this misfortune. I know of several directors—Pabst, Vidor and Stroheim among them—who would have had their credit withdrawn from certain pictures owing to interference either during shooting or editing. As it is, many have heard of Eisenstein as the maker of *Potemkin* and will view this Mexican travesty with astonished eyes.

My second point raises the old issue of what constitutes good photography. From the eulogistic press we gather that white clouds in a dark sky are the hallmark of quality, and it would appear that this sort of stuff can lead the critics into believing that they are also seeing good film. You will remember that the same thing occurred with *The Blue Light*. Now, if they like this sort of stuff why don't they tell us about Herbert's Movietone series, amongst which the Irish item has Tissé's over-correction beaten to a frazzle. They forget, moreover, as Grierson has pointed out, that Eisenstein's films have not previously been notable for their great photography, but rather for the referential treatment which he employs in his cutting. They forget, also, that almost any photographer given the same set of Wrattens, the same conditions and the same locations, could produce equally sweet images. So an end to this photographic fetish and let them get down to the essentials of movie-making which were not to be found in Lesser-Sinclair's free gift to the art of the cinema.

PAUL ROTHA.

QUEEN CHRISTINA

Production and Distribution: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Scenario: Salka Viertel and H. M. Harwood. Direction: Rouben Mamoulian. Photography: William Daniels. Editing: Blanche Sewell. With Greta Garbo, Lewis Stone, John Gilbert. Length: 9047 feet.

I DO not find it in me to write about this picture, for it would be too cruel, but I must write instead of Garbo, who contrives, though Heaven knows how, to surpass all the badness they thrust upon her. Of her many American pictures, all without exception have been trash; yet this astonishing woman surmounts the very crudity with which they choose to surround her. Here, a lithe figure sheathed in men's breeches and stamping boots, she strides into our presence and again reveals her dynamic personal magnetism. She is a woman, it seems, destined to continue in a world that spells misunderstanding. No director who has tried to harness these grave features to his will has yet been able to create a film which brings us the woman as she is. *Queen Christina* perhaps comes nearest; with its great close-ups

and sublime fading shot. But the showman tricks of Mamoulian and the base falseness of the environment conspire against her. Before it is too late, before the synthetic background against which she moves makes final reckoning, may she, like this old-time Queen of Sweden, set her back to the call of glamour and give herself just once into the hands of a mind which may try to understand her, so that such a film above all others may be preserved for posterity. That this imagined picture will find its shape in Europe I have no doubt, because it is against the whole American conception that Garbo battles.

PAUL ROTHA.

CATHERINE THE GREAT

Production: London Films. Supervision: Alexander Korda. Direction: Paul Czinner. Scenario: Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis. Photography: Georges Périnal. Settings: Vincent Korda. Costumes: John Armstrong. With Elisabeth Bergner, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Flora Robson, Gerald du Maurier. Distribution: United Artists. Length: 8650 feet.

FORGET your social and historical conscience and you will find the new Korda picture amusing diversion punctuated with moments of drama. It is polished; it is artificial; and it is theatrical in treatment. But if you are tolerantly disposed towards romantic costume pictures, the insignificance of all this pomp and petulance will not arise to disturb your entertainment.

Closer inspection reveals much to praise and not a little to criticise. Let us be pleasant first: about the settings of the film, which in all ways mark such an advance on the customary British setting that I may be too enthusiastic. But these sets depicting the Imperial Palace have a dignity and a regal lavishness quite different from the property-room bazaars which usually do service for movie royal magnificence. And the clothes. Armstrong has excelled in his designing, becoming decorative yet remaining practical (no easy task), notably in the case of young Fairbanks and Flora Robson. True, the court loungers stand about as if at a fancy-dress party, but that is Czinner's and not Armstrong's fault. Périnal also has maintained a pretty focus, weak in patches where the set-ups mean nothing to the content; but perhaps that also is the fault of the director.

I found Elisabeth Bergner curiously disappointing, in some way unable to grasp the drama within the scene and interpret it for us. Despite my admiration for her brilliant ability, I am doubtful if she was cast correctly. The younger Fairbanks, labouring under

a bad make-up, begins well, but fails to remain impressive, his madness having no inspiration save storming and his quieter moods being too superficial to impress. Flora Robson I liked best of all. She carried conviction and behaved credibly. She perhaps failed to give full meaning to her lines; but then the dialogue throughout is trashy. People, either ancient or modern, do not express themselves in the tit-bits style which has been adapted in these pseudo-historical pictures.

The direction, attributed to Czinner under the supervision of Korda, I have purposely left till last because it is the most difficult to assess. It looks as if Bergner, Fairbanks and the others have been given their heads, and the camera adjusted to them. There is little attempt to create any of the situations cinematically, to get underneath the skin of the dramatic incidents and present them through the camera. The picture's appeal rests upon its physical good looks and, from this point of view, almost succeeds. But you will know better than to expect some re-creation of the spirit of Russia in the eighteenth century, of the famine that stalked the land or the intolerant tyranny that held the reins.

PAUL ROTHA.

MALA THE MAGNIFICENT

Production and Distribution: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Direction: W. S. Van Dyke. Photography: Clyde de Vinna and others. Length: 9650 feet.

THIS EPIC of the Arctic pre-dates Flaherty's *Nanook* by about ten years and should have been put before the public just before the War. Actually, of course, it is M.G.M.'s successor to *Trader Horn*, and follows in the same path of exploiting the naturalistic tradition for the sake of box-office. Arctic conditions, however, could not have been so inviting to Van Dyke as that pleasant camp at the foot of the Murchison Falls, and I am not surprised that so much of the picture bears signs of Culver City. It would seem that the formula for these pictures is murder—whether of man or beast—for only by killing can Van Dyke produce the necessary thrilling scenes for M.G.M. to sponsor the outfit. I do not remember how many animals were slain in *Mala* to secure the right effect of thrill on the audience, but the number includes walrus, polar bear, caribou—and fish. The deliberation with which this is presented is nauseating and is not excused by the fact that primitive peoples kill to eat. So also do we, but our films are not filled with slaughter-houses. Technically the film is insignificant, with photography that increases our respect for *Nanook*, and a use of native dialogue that

is cumbersome and unnecessary. The Esquimo heroine, I am told on good authority, comes from some South American dive. Yet, though I hate to confess it, *Mala* is better than the usual run of adapted plays. PAUL ROTHA.

DESIGN FOR LIVING. (*American. Paramount.*) As dramatic critics who write about films have pointed out, presumably in condemnation, Lubitsch has not made a photograph of Noel Coward's play. He has shaped the theme afresh for the screen, clipped from it its moral theorising and tailor-made it for his players—Miriam Hopkins, Frederic March, Gary Cooper and Edward Everett Horton—just as Coward, on his own confession, tailor-made the play for Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne and himself. It is pleasant, slick, superficial farce, without any introspection. The imposing title, as Ivor Brown has remarked, has been given to "a little comedy about the amorous manœuvres of two trivial men and one trivial woman," and *Design for Loving* would have been more appropriate for a film describing the predicament of a young woman in love with two men at the same time, and the "gentleman's agreement," precluding sex, under which they contract to live together in a Paris apartment. As always, Lubitsch handles his players with skill and sympathy, though Gary Cooper seems somewhat out of his element. Lubitsch is one of the few directors who have succeeded consistently in leaving their films with the imprint of a single dominating personality. *Design for Living* is in the true Lubitsch tradition, and I think it his most satisfying sound film. F. H.

WHITHER GERMANY? (*British. B. and N.*) Typical of a current tendency to survey conditions in Europe by means of newsreel extracts is this short film which describes the trend of events in Germany since pre-War times. Its purpose is to awaken consciousness of the direction those events are taking and, though the commentary is restrained, it is plain that the film has been made with the conviction that Nazi Germany is moving towards war. The opening sequences emphasise the nation's love of pageantry, represented in carnivals and folk-dances, and it is suggested that this can find more sinister outlet in displays of militarism. The film maintains the belief that militarism was the cause of the War, and after brief sequences dealing with post-War conditions in a depressed and defeated country, troops again dominate the screen. A parallel is drawn between the goose-stepping troops who marched past the Kaiser and the Nazi troops who march in similar fashion past Hitler to-day. Here the film's conviction is most obviously apparent.

The closing shots pointedly contrast a sports ground crowded with young men exercising, and a graveyard patterned with small white crosses. Composed as it is of actual material, the film has a certain educative value, but the bias in the selection of the sequences must be remembered. F. H.

ANNA UND ELISABETH. (*German. Kollectiv.*) This is primarily an acting film and does not enlarge our experience of cinema. It is unfolded slowly and deliberately with great emphasis of detail, but like so many German films it is inclined to meander before arriving at the point. The story describes the relations of two women, one a wealthy but crippled recluse and the other a peasant girl, credited by the villagers with the power of working miracles. No matter how much the Germans leave their studios and get out into the open air, they still retain their studio mind. That is the great fault of this picture. Frank Wysbar could learn a great deal from Duvivier. Dorothea Wieck's Elisabeth and Hertha Thiele's Anna are the two main interests of acting. You will remember both of them in *Madchen in Uniform.* The former, now with Paramount in Hollywood, shows a considerable power of emotion, but is inclined to give way to mannerisms which become irritating. Hertha Thiele, on the other hand, plays less sensationally and more capably. In addition, Mathias Wieman's consumptive is a restrained and wholly admirable performance. P. R.

DUCK SOUP. (*American. Paramount.*) A new director, Leo McCarey, has effected a subtle change in the Marx tradition. Previously the wildness of the Brothers has lacked the wild logic that would have given it purpose and removed from the film the impression of loose and haphazard construction. In *Duck Soup*, McCarey appears to have exercised a greater influence, both over the composing of the scenario and the performance of the Brothers. This has had two results: the picture has direction and a sense of purpose; and the Brothers, their madness hampered somewhat by a method, have not always the spontaneity we expect. But if the latter is regrettable, the former is more than sufficient compensation. The setting is Ruritania, and there is some glorious burlesque of pomp and pageantry, of Cabinet meetings and political receptions, of a State trial and of modern warfare: and, as always, of conventional etiquette, for the Marx Brothers are the supreme anarchists of the screen. One incidental sequence of slapstick in which Harpo smashes a mirror and then appears opposite Groucho as his reflection, is the funniest thing in any Marx film since *The Cocoanuts.* F. H.

EVERYWOMAN'S MAN (*American. M.G.M.*). Grierson once wrote that "there are good fight-films and fight-films not so good, but none bad." This is of the former, a fight-film of giants, rapid and exciting. W. S. Van Dyke directed from the fool-proof script of Frances Marion.

FOUR FRIGHTENED PEOPLE. (*American. Paramount.*) Cecil de Mille sacrifices all claims to intelligence as a director with this idiotic adaptation of Arnot Robertson's novel.

GOLDEN HARVEST (*American. Paramount*). An attempt to introduce contemporary economic problems and settings into story films, this picture of the wheat-belt and the Chicago wheat-pit is well ahead of the ordinary run. People do strange things in an improbable manner, but it is worth seeing.

THE INVISIBLE MAN (*American. Universal*). This lively interpretation of the Wells fantasy would have been more forceful and successful if there had been a completely realistic background for the study of the exhuberant sense of freedom and escape enjoyed by a man unencumbered by a body. Gross overacting and the ponderous love story weaken the effect. Interesting chiefly for its astonishing technical ingenuity.

LIEBELEI (*German*). An adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's romantic tragedy, describing the effects of the subordination of human feelings to rigid standards of social honour. Delicate in treatment, beautifully acted, cold and formal in mood. Max Ophuls directed.

THE MASCOT (*French. H. Rose*). With immense patience and fine artistry, M. Starevitch and his wife have succeeded in making children's toys and the animated contents of a garbage tin as expressive as many a Hollywood puppet. It is a child's dream, but the macabre atmosphere and grotesque fantasy border on nightmare. Indifferent editing has not helped an occasionally obscure story.

UN MONASTERE (*French. Film Society*). An intimate impression of the life of a Trappist monk, by Robert Alexandre, director of *The Polish Corridor*. Effectively photographed and skilfully edited, the film shows not only the ordinary routine of the monastery, but such intimate scenes as a funeral service and a communion rite. Sombre but not unimpressive.

NIGHT FLIGHT (*American. M.G.M.*). A melodrama of the South American night mail; a clumsy patchwork of fine aerial shots by Elmer Dyer and Charles Marshall—studio reconstructions of airport interiors, plentiful Dunning, and episodic "human" incidents. Scenes of radio communication between ground and air are effective.

L'ORDONNANCE (*French*). Tourjanski is heavy-handed and uses excess footage to put across his points, but the film, adapted from a de Maupassant story, is better than most recent Continental imports. Watch for the opening and the ending: they are economically shot. But you will go away with the impression that Tourjanski is more of a theatre showman than a movie director.

LE PETIT ROI (*French*). Julien Duvivier has directed this Ruritanian tale realistically and without comic purpose, and there is a carefully contrived background for a compelling performance by Robert Lynen as a boy king who prefers mud-larking at Monte Carlo to kingship in a mist-bound mediaeval castle. The photography has a fine atmospheric quality.

● AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT regarding the booking of films by film societies and other organisations will be found on page 199.

FILM SOCIETIES

TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY

THE Tyneside Film Society had its beginnings at a small public meeting held in Newcastle in December 1932, and after fourteen months, during which the committee experienced a series of reverses, January 1934 finally saw the committee in a position to report that the major obstacles had been overcome. The Newcastle Watch Committee has issued licences for private Sunday performances, and it may perhaps be stated for the information of those experiencing difficulty in securing similar licences that the negotiations were placed in the hands of an experienced solicitor and a memorandum was distributed to members of the Licensing Committee setting out the aims of the Society, the case for the Society, proposed programmes, and relevant extracts from the Constitution.

The membership was 450 at the end of February. The subscription for the session 1933–4 is 6s., and a comprehensive programme has been organised. Of the three private exhibitions arranged, two have so far been held; the films which have been shown include *The New Generation*, *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, *King's English*, *Der Traumende Mund*, *In der Nacht*, and *Country Comes to Town*. Other items on the Society's programme are two private exhibitions of silent documentary and entertainment films for children, a public film exhibition for children arranged in conjunction with the Modern Languages Association (the programme will include *A Nous la Liberté*), a public exhibition of stills from British and foreign films of outstanding merit or interest, displays of amateur 16-mm. films, joint meetings with local dramatic and other societies, and lectures on film appreciation and the technique of production. The Society has formed a strong link with Montagu Amateur Pictures, an amateur Newcastle film-producing body which has won international and national awards, and A. G. Greaves, A.R.P.S., its chairman, has joined the committee. Arrangements have been made for a Saturday afternoon excursion with Montagu Pictures during the production of its next film; the committee feels that its objects are served as much by stressing the technical side of film production as by merely exhibiting films of distinction.

As the objects of the Society include the exertion of some influence where possible on the character of programmes in local cinemas, a proposal to issue a regular commentary on local films has received

consideration. In the meantime the Chairman of the Society, Ernest Dyer, B.A., has been appointed regular film critic of Tyneside's most influential newspaper, the "Newcastle Evening Chronicle," and has been given an entirely free hand.

The Hon. Secretary of this new and energetic body is M. C. Pottinger, c/o The Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. 14th Jan. *Paris Markets. Tonende Handschrift. Un Monastère. The Table of the Poor.* (All Film Soc.) 11th Feb. *Gathering Moss* (B.I.F.). Reiniger's *Carmen* (Film Soc.). *Reifende Jugend* (Film Soc.). 11th Mar. Complete version of Eisenstein's *October* (Film Soc.).

BILLINGHAM FILM SOCIETY, Hon. Sec. J. R. Park, 26 Redwing Lane, Norton. Performances of films similar to those given by other societies are held at a local picturehouse on Wednesday evenings. There is no formal membership, anyone being able to attend by buying a ticket at the box-office.

BIRMINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. S. G. Hawes, 163 Pershore Road, Birmingham. 14th Jan. *Loves of Zero* (Film Soc.). *Thunder, Lightning and Rain. The Fourteenth of July* (Film Soc.). 11th Feb. *Prague* (Film Soc.). *Synthetic Sound Tracks* (Film Soc.). Zuts' Cartoon (Film Soc.). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.). 11th Mar. *Springtime at the Zoo* (B.I.F.). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). *La Maternelle* (Film Soc.).

CHESHIRE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Diana Baerlin, Whatcroft Hall, Northwich. 4th Jan. *Steel* (G.-B. Dis.). *Les Mains* (Film Soc.). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.). 15th Feb. *Vienna the Wonderful.* Disney's *Just Dogs* (G.-B. Dis.). *Madchen in Uniform* (Nat. Dis.). 15th Mar. *The Mystery Ship.* Disney's *The Fire Fighters* (G.-B. Dis.). *Rasputin.*

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. G. R. Bailey, 56 High Street, Croydon. 21st Jan. *The Eternal Triangle* (primitive). Reiniger's *Cinderella* (Film Soc.). *Turksib* (Arcos). *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.* 25th Feb. *Berlin* (Wardour). *A Nous la Liberté* (Universal). 18th Mar. *Romance in a Pond* (B.I.F.). *Finding His Voice* (West. Electric). *Contact* (Wardour). Fischinger's *Hungarian Dances* (Filmophone). *Potemkin* (Arcos).

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 South St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh. 7th Jan. *Uberfall* (Film Soc.). *O'er Hill and Dale* (G.-B. Dis.). Disney's *Egyptian Melodies* (G.-B. Dis.). *Der Traumende Mund* (Film Soc.). 11th Feb. *Kamet Conquered* (Gifford). Disney's *Fox Hunt* (G.-B. Dis.). *The Virtuous Isidore* (Film Soc.).

On 20th Feb. a sub-standard performance included *The Wonderful Lie* (Pathescope), *All on a Summer's Day* and *Hair*, made by the Meteor Society, and a film of the Borders by Alan Harper. 18th-24th Mar. premier show of Jenny Brown's Shetland film *The Rugged Island.*

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec. D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street. 14th Jan. *Making the Feather Wait,* Ideal Cinemagazine (G.-B. Dis.). *Canal Barge* (Film Soc.). *Sound Track Patterns* (Film Soc.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos). 4th Feb. *Screen Snapshot* (Columbia). *Mountain Music* (First National). *Granton Trawler* (G.P.O.). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.). 25th Feb. Zut's Cartoon (Film Soc.). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). *O'er Hill and Dale* (G.-B. Dis.). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.). 11th Mar. Pudovkin's *Deserter* (Film Soc.). *Barbarina* (Beacon).

Lectures have been given by C. A. Oakley on "The American Film," and J. C. Elder on "Educational Films." Sub-standard films shown have included *Hungarian Rhapsody, Moana,* and *The Covered Wagon.*

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College Leicester. 20th Jan. Reiniger's *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Spione Am Werk* (Wardour). 17th Feb. *Granton Trawler* (G.P.O.). *Cargo from Jamaica* (G.P.O.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos).

Two performances have been held in conjunction with the Vaughan College Students' Union. 13th Jan. *The Story of a Glass of Water* (B.I.F.). Elton's *Aero Engine* (G.P.O.). *The Life of the Bean* (B.I.F.). *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* (Universal). 3rd Feb. *M* (Nat. Dis.), etc. Members of the Society are able to attend a series of ten University Extension lectures, being given by John Grierson, on "The Art of the Cinema."

MAIDSTONE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Miss G. M. Nicholson, Fowden Hall, London Road, Maidstone. 21st Jan. *Don Quixote* (United Artists). *A Nous la Liberté* (Universal). 18th Feb. *We Take off our Hats* (Wardour). *Don Dougio Farabanca* (Asfi). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.).

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 86 Hulton Street, Salford. 20th Jan. *In der Nacht* (Film Soc.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos). 24th Feb. *The Crazy Ray. War is Hell* (W. P. Films). 24th Mar. *Zuyderzeewerks* (Film Soc.). *The Mighty World. The General Line* (Arcos).

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. W. Baldwin Fletcher, I.C.I. (Alkali) Ltd., Northwich. 3rd Jan. *Oh, What a Night. Madchen in Uniform* (Nat. Dis.). *Drifters* (New Era). 7th Feb. *Cargo from Jamaica* (G.P.O.). 17th Jan. *Gaumont Sound Mirror. The Telephone Service* (G.P.O.). *Tabu* (Paramount). Disney's *Barnyard Broadcast* (G.-B. Dis.). Reiniger's *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Ninety Degrees South.* 14th Mar. *Brock the Badger* (B.I.F.). *Symphony of the Streets* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Night* (G.-B. Dis.). *Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.).

OXFORD CITY FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Mrs. Hilda Harrison, Sandlands, Boars Hill, Oxford. 7th Jan. *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (Film. Soc.). Disney's *Whoopee Party* (G.-B. Dis.). *Joan of Arc.* 21st Jan. *The Aphis* (B.I.F.). *Lichtertanz* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Bears and Bees* (United Artists). *The General Line* (Arcos). 11th Feb. *Cotton Growing* (B.I.F.). Reiniger's *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Uberfall* (Film Soc.). *En Natt* (Film Soc.). 25th Feb. *Gathering Moss* (B.I.F.). *Touchdown Mickey* (G.-B. Dis.). *Magician's Apprentice. Heart of an Indian Maid.* Disney's *King Neptune* (United Artists). *Un Soir de Rafle.*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. Zut's Cartoon (Film Soc.). Pudovkin's *Deserter* (Film Soc.). 4th Feb. *Power* (Zenifilms). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). Mickey's *Mellerdramer* (United Artists). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.). 18th Feb. *The Toymaker's Dream* (a 1900 cartoon and puppet film). *Great Line Fishing* (G.P.O.). Schufftan Process Film (Process Productions). Disney's *Fox Hunt* (G.-B. Dis.). *La Maternelle* (Film Soc.). 4th Mar. *King's English* (B.I.F.). *King Neptune* (United Artists), Ideal Cinemagazine (G.-B Dis.). Disney's *Autumn* (G.-B. Dis.). *Joyless Street.*

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY. 21st Jan.. *Eyes of Science. Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *Frollicking Fish* (G.-B. Dis.). *Der Hauptmann von Koepenick* (Film Soc.). 4th Feb. *The Changing Year* (Pathé). *Building a Building* (United Artists). *The Fourteenth of July* (Film Soc.). 18th Feb. *Brumes D'Automne* (Film Soc.). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos). 4th Mar. *Mor-Vran* (Film Soc.). *Le Loup Garou* (W. & P.). *Birds in Spring* (United Artists).

SOUTH WALES FILM SOCIETY. This new body hopes to arrange performances and lectures on the lines of other societies, and also to give sub-standard. exhibitions in country villages. The Hon. Sec. is D. Evans, Llwyn Onn, Masons Road, Gorseinon, Glam.

THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER

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IT IS hoped to arrange for the School to be held near some important operation, such as quarrying, which will provide a suitable subject for filming.

SEVERAL IMPORTANT FILMS WILL BE SCREENED DURING THE WEEK-END.

ALL IFMA members wishing to attend the Summer School should communicate immediately with the Hon. Sec. G. A. Shaw, 32 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.1.

NON-MEMBERS are eligible to attend on paying a small supplementary fee.

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PRODUCTION FOR AMATEURS

CHOOSING A SUBJECT

ANDREW BUCHANAN

SOMETIMES brilliant technicians select the most unsuitable subjects for their productions, and, quite naturally, there are others who possess a genius for selecting good subjects, but are unable to produce them adequately. So much depends upon the individual and his circumstances that no hard-and-fast rules can be laid down on this most difficult and fundamental matter.

However, the first advice I would give is to remember your medium and its demand for Movement. Secondly, that Movement is created both by the action taking place in shots, and also by the relation of a series of shots, one to the other. By the latter method, a number of shots of static images can be given movement by the skill of the cutter. Perhaps it seems elementary to ask an enthusiastic student of the film to remember Movement, but it is surprising how it is lost sight of when one is engrossed in filming a subject and encounters, at every turn, something unexpected, that is irresistible but totally unnecessary, which will probably upset one's cutting plans.

The documentary film is of primary importance, but one must arrive at that conclusion by logical reasoning and experience. Otherwise, to be filled at the outset with an intense desire to make documentaries means that one will probably copy characteristics of those who have succeeded, and consequently the individuality of the producer will fail to express itself fully, through having been preoccupied in striving to live up to certain standards set by others. Also, please eliminate from the mind the word "raw." Avoid "raw material," and "life in the raw." It is inclined to be boring—and inaccurate. Substitute the word "natural" for "raw."

Preliminaries over, I would urge the producer to plan his early subjects so that they are composed chiefly of exteriors. If his ambition extends to portraying fictional drama, make the setting in the open air, as far as possible.

Next, I suggest to him to give his camera away for at least two weeks, because his first job is to plan and produce his subject in his mind, and the camera fills one with impatience to start shooting. I would like to see him begin by making a film of the city, town, or village in which he resides, and, however well he knows the neigh-

bourhood, he will, or should, find it quite a different place when he approaches it with a view to portraying it on the screen. Instead of rushing out and filming the High Street, the Curiosity Shop on the corner, and shooting that dreadful pan from the weathercock on top of the steeple to the porch of the church, let him consider, perhaps for the first time, what it is that creates a certain character—atmosphere—about the place. Why is Swindon so different from Canterbury? Birmingham from Torquay? There is something more than sea or no sea, trains or cathedrals. The characters of the residents reflect that something; the shops, and the things they sell. That "something" must be captured, and that is why I suggested the camera should be locked away for two weeks, until the producer has discovered what it is, and how to portray it. If the atmosphere of the past pervades the place, pictorial reference must be made to it. Why do those craft-workers, in the narrow street under the shadow of the cathedral, fit in so perfectly there. How out of place they would seem spinning next to vast engine sheds. Imagine rows and rows and rows of tiny depressing houses running past the walls of the cathedral. They "don't belong." Unfortunately, they are in their rightful place, framing vast locomotive shops. Watch the faces of workers in the one town, and the other. Estimate the different *tempo* of living. In one street a horse dozes. In another it would cause chaotic traffic blocks. What dominates or influences life in Torquay that is so different from Birmingham? Holidays and work? Something more than that.

Along such lines I would plan the scenario in my mind. Certainly I should film the High Street and the crooked cottages, but only if they were real contributions to the story—if they built up the character—atmosphere—soul, call it what you will, of the place. Go to Wales and feel the effect of the valleys; to Scotland and experience the stillness in the Highlands. Those who live there are used to such things, but unconsciously they reflect the spirit of the localities in a hundred ways which the camera can capture: the slowness of their walk; beards; bent shoulders; facial expressions; how they earn their livings—all are governed by their surroundings, and the screen can vividly show this to be so. But is that kind of thing enough? Is not a central theme a necessity? I believe the individual can best answer that question, but, personally, I feel a theme is essential, thereby closely linking the documentary to the fictional film. In Wright's excellent *The Country Comes to Town* the interrelation of town and country is extremely fine, and consolidates the whole film. The ending is brilliant. Crowds of city clerks hurry over London's bridges to work. The scene dissolves into long shots of fields and downs, and the commentary asks you to remember, every time you watch city crowds, to see just beyond them the

country-side, upon which they depend for their health, and how the sun and the fresh air and the pasture lands are brought to them in dairy produce every morning. Here is another idea. If one lives in London, make a subject of Edgware Road, from Marble Arch to the old village of Edgware. The changes in character from W1 to 2; from towering flats to narrow thoroughfares; extensive stores to crowded stalls; and so on, to widening roads flanked by automobile factories; and still on, until rural surroundings gradually creep in. I mention this as the story is ready-made, and all the technical resources of the cameraman will be brought into play.

In conclusion, I would implore the producer to be as natural as his material should be, and avoid being clever. Please do not shoot telegraph poles sideways without a reason—if there could be one. Fight against the desire to film that colossal power station merely because you can obtain marvellous shots of the chimneys. Film the power station because you want to relate its wonderful work. Shoot a telephone normally. If you show it upside down, you must know why. People who introduce unusual angles to emphasise particular points, sometimes know what they are doing, and one enthuses over their originality. But it is so terribly easy to shoot things like that without knowing why. If you are filming Winchester, remember it is quite a long walk from Moscow, and that the brilliant characterisation in many Russian films would be totally wrong if applied to your story. I believe in studying the work of every producer everywhere, and then going away and doing what I think is correct, but if I felt I was merely copying what I have seen, I would throw my efforts into the bin.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

RUDOLF ARNHEIM. Author of "Film." Now engaged on the International Encyclopædia of Cinematography.

ANDREW BUCHANAN. Producer of the *Gaumont-British Magazine*, formerly known as *Ideal Cinemagazine*. Author of "Films: the Way of the Cinema," and several novels.

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI. Director of *En Rade* and *Rien que les Heures*.

ERIC ELLIOTT. Author of "Anatomy of Motion Picture Art."

JOHN GRIERSON. G.P.O. Films producer. His *Industrial Britain* is at present being widely shown throughout the country.

STUART LEGG. Director of *The New Generation*. One of the G.P.O. Film Unit.

HUGH MacDIARMID. Author of "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle," "Lenin," etc. His new volume of poems "Stony Limits," will shortly be published by Gollancz.

MACK W. SCHWAB. Hollywood film critic.

TWO FILMS by W. H. GEORGE

THESE TWO 16 mm. sub-standard films, designed for use in the classroom, are simple and unambitious, and, in this respect, contain lessons for all amateur film-makers. *Clouds and Rain* begins with a laboratory creation of clouds. It then goes out into the country to describe types of cloud and the weather they create. The angles have been chosen with imagination, though occasionally there is unnecessary over-emphasis of angle. The exteriors are distinguished by some of the loveliest photography yet seen on 16 mm. Filtering has been used skilfully to bring out the different types of clouds. In *The Outer Isles*, George used filters excessively, and although he obtained lovely cloud effects (justified in *Clouds and Rain*), he lost the action he was shooting on the ground.

Nevertheless these two films are noteworthy for their choice of subject and their technique. After painful experiences of many early efforts by amateurs, these films appear to be the product of real thought. They are both available from the G.P.O. film library.

D. F. TAYLOR.

GLASGOW INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS GROUP, which has already a membership of fifteen, intends to start production immediately on a film of a documentary and experimental nature. Membership of the Group will be limited to twenty-five. The Hon. Sec. is D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

STUDIO accommodation is a difficult problem with most amateurs. The Brondesbury Cine Society, however, is fortunate in having premises of some 1400 square feet, with a lighting equipment of nearly 25 kilowatts, which is available by special arrangement for individual workers. Full particulars may be had from A. D. Frischmann, 27 Mincing Lane, London, E.C.3. The Brondesbury Cine Society, though mainly interested in film play production, has a small circle of keen experimental workers.

● **FILM BOOKS WANTED.**—*Film Till Now. Anatomy of Motion Picture Art.* All standard works. Abbey Book Shop, 3 South Street, St Andrews, where all books reviewed in *Cinema Quarterly* may be purchased.

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